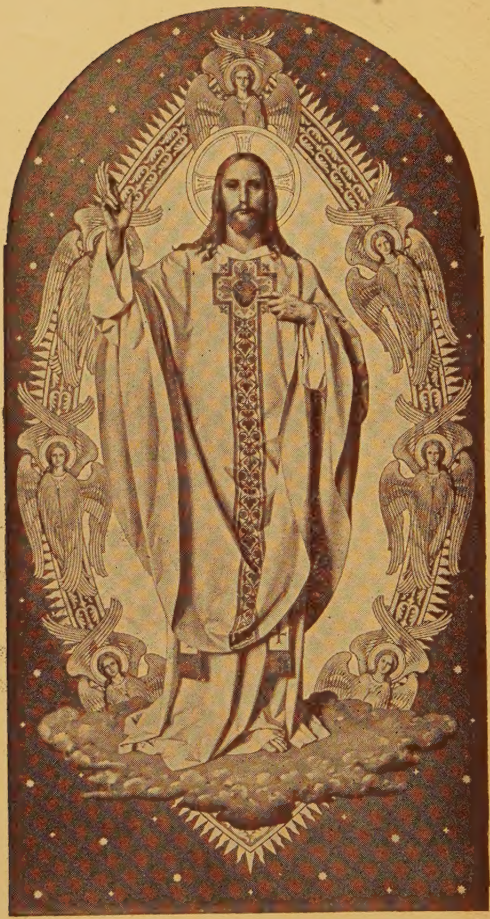
AN EPITOME OF THE PRIESTLY LIFE



"Thou art a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech."—*Heb. v. 4-6.*

AN EPITOME

OF

THE PRIESTLY LIFE

BY

CANON ARVISENET

Adapted from the Latin Original
Memoriale Vitae Sacerdotalis by
Rev. F. J. O'Sullivan

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✠PATRICK J. HAYES, D.D.,
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AUCTORIS PROLOGII QUÆDAM EXCERPTA

VOS scitis, optimi et venerandi Sacerdotes, quid dixerit Deus noster et æternus Rex Jesus: "Ille solus, qui perseveraverit usque in finem, salvus erit." Quid prodesset igitur nobis cœpisse, si ad culmen non perveniremus? Misimus manum ad aratrum, ne respiciamus retro; sed Deo gratias agentes, qui eripuit nos de potestate tenebrarum, et transtulit in regnum Filii dilectionis suae. Oremus, ut qui cœpit in nobis opus bonum, perficiat usque in diem Christi Jesu; et ejus, qui erga nos adeo dives est in misericordia, gratiae cooperantes, cum metu et tremore salutem nostram perficiamus. Justi adhuc justificemur; sancti adhuc sanctificemur, ne cum aliis praedicaverimus, ipsi reprobi efficiamur.

Videamus ergo, et caveamus, ne aurum templi obscuretur, ne color optimus mutetur, ne lapides sanctuarii dispersi virtutis formam amittant. Idcirco liceat mediocritati meae, Fratres optimi et venerandi, leve hoc opus, *Memoriale*

Vitae Sacerdotalis dictum, vobis offerre, in quo praecipua regularum sacerdotalium capita memorantur. Sentio quidem et candide confiteor opus esse scopo nimis impar, minus eruditionis habens, minus pietatis spirans: verum animo benevolo parcet certius vestra benignitas. O, si scirem loqui! O, si verba mea, quasi facula arderent, et possent esse virtutis incentiva sanctitatisque stimuli! Sed quod inanis non potuit homo, efficiat potentissimus luminum Pater, qui facit ministros suos ignem urentem.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

A VENERABLE Irish priest, shortly before his death, presented me with a little leather-bound volume of meditations, whose much-thumbed pages indicated that it had been long his vade mecum. The title of the work was *Memoriale Vitae Sacerdotalis,* and it bore on its initial page the imprimatur of Most Rev. Daniel Murray, Archbishop of Dublin, and the information that it was used as a text-book in the Seminary of Maynooth just one hundred years ago. As I read I was captivated by its charm, its vigor, its cogency, its meatiness, and above all by the spirit of priestly zeal and charity that it breathed. It seemed as if our Lord were speaking directly to me; and this was not strange, for it was largely a mosaic of Scripture texts, most aptly chosen and most deftly applied.

The inspiration came to me to present this volume in English dress that it might be acceptable to our busy English-speaking clergy who have not the leisure to translate the subject matter of their medi-

tations, nor the inclination to peruse the voluminous tomes that have been more recently published. I am quite conscious that many of the crisp, concise Latin sentences may have suffered somewhat in the translation; but I hope, however, that sufficient of the beauty of the original casket has been preserved to attract attention to the jewels within. Such as it is, I offer it to my brother priests, hoping that it may prove an assistance to them in more faithfully fulfilling the duties of their ministry and in walking more closely in the footsteps of our Divine Model.

Before bringing to a close this brief foreword, I wish to express my gratitude to Rev. Father Kuenzel, of Dubuque, whose name is not unknown to clerical readers. He had undertaken a translation of the same work, but, upon learning that I had the task all but completed, he graciously expressed his willingness to retire in my favor, adding: "I am glad that someone has translated that golden little volume."

CHAPTER I

THE VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

HOW lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for thy courts.

How blessed and delightful it is to immolate the Sacred Host to thee in thy tabernacle, to sing and to make music to thee!

How good it is to declare thy justices, to preach penance for the remission of sins!

How good it is to teach and baptize the nations, to cast out devils, to cure the sick, to increase the number of thy servants, to sanctify and to perfect them!

Who shall give to me, O my God, that I should be thus able to subject the whole world to thee, to make every land adore thee and sing thy praises, that all flesh might bless thy holy name and every creature serve thee?

True it is, my son, that thou desirest

the priesthood, that thou desirest a good work. Sublime is the dignity to which thou aspirest; but take care, for great also is the ruin to which this lofty dignity exposes thee.

Wherefore, no matter how vehemently thou mayest be attracted towards this holy state, do not presume to take to thyself the honor unless thou be called by me as Aaron was.

Not anyone, not even the apostles have chosen me, but I have chosen them and have appointed them that they might bring forth fruit in patience.

Mine are the sheep; mine is the sheepfold. I myself am the door-keeper; to me it belongs to open.

He alone to whom I open, rightly enters in, securely goes abroad and finds pastures.

But he who enters otherwise than through me is a thief and a robber, who does injury to himself and to my flock.

Verily, my son, let him who wishes to come after me that he may become a fisher of men, know that this is not in the power of him that willeth, nor of him that

runneth, but in the will of me that show mercy and choose.

Truly, my son, the burden of the priesthood is one to be feared even by angelic shoulders; and how shalt thou be able to bear it unless I assist thee, unless I strengthen thee with my special graces?

Knowest thou not, my son, that only to those whom I have called do I promise such helps?

Imitate not, therefore, those who not by me but by themselves are exalted.

Strive, my son, to make sure thy calling and election; for if thou advancest to the priesthood sure of thy vocation, thou wilt walk peaceful and undisturbed in the midst of dangers, knowing that I will direct, lead, and defend those whom I have called.

Joyfully and faithfully wilt thou fulfill thy duties, believing that in so doing thou art ever accomplishing what is pleasing to me.

Truly, my good Lord, to serve thee in the priesthood is the desire of my heart,

but to attain to this I am not able unless thou speakest, invitest and commandest.

Deign, therefore, to make known thy will to me. Show me, O God, whether thou choosest me or not.

By these means, my son, shalt thou be able to know my will and discern thy vocation.

Before all things seek, ask, knock; that is to say, humbly, ardently and perseveringly pray to me, the Father of Lights, that I may give wisdom to thine understanding.

Retire for a little while into a quiet place, that being seriously recollected in thyself and disengaged from worldly things, thou mayst interrogate me more devoutly and give a more attentive ear to my reply.

And since it is my custom to direct men through men, seek thou the advice of a holy and wise man.

That he may be able to judge and decide with greater certitude, candidly lay before him all the secrets of thy conscience, thine acts, thy passions, thy desires and thine intentions.

Have absolutely nothing in view, my son, save my glory and thine own salvation; let this most bright star direct thy steps.

Consider what state thou wouldst wish to have chosen if thou wert now to die.

Diligently consider thy mental qualities and all the inclinations of thy heart to see if they are such as the sublime state of the priesthood demands. Take care especially lest Satan deceive thee by purposely persuading thee to aspire to the holy calling of the priesthood for the sake of filthy lucre, honors and an easy life.

For this reason many have entered my sanctuary, only to their own ruin.

If, however, after mature consideration thou perceivest that from those graver sins that are repugnant to the holy state of the priesthood, thou art free, either because thou hast happily preserved thine innocence or performed suitable penance;

If thou perceivest that prudent and holy men have deemed thee fit and worthy to assume ecclesiastical functions;

If thou feelest thyself disposed to undertake them and drawn to them by an interior attraction;

If thou perceivest that thou art attracted to the priesthood by a pure and not by a vicious or worldly intention;

If, above all, thy bishop should have called thee and wished thee to take upon thyself the duties of the ministry, or at least when thou wast trembling at the door of the sanctuary, should have invited thee to enter with confidence;

Then, my son, know that my will is made known to thee; then promptly, without further consideration or delay, devote thyself to thy vocation.

Advance, with humility it is true, but no matter how much thou mayst be restrained by holy fear, do not obstinately refuse.

Advance, my son; advance with confidence, knowing that I who have called thee will have regard for thy poverty and weakness.

Do not be discouraged; do not faint, but presume not in thyself but in me who will operate in thee.

But if, my son, thou hast already assumed the honor of the holy priesthood and looking into thyself seest that thou hast entered my sanctuary with temerity, either because thou hast not becoming purity or sanctity or because thou art lacking in the necessary qualifications or because thou hast been attracted by temporal motives and not by a desire for my glory;

O my son, grieve, repent, bring forth worthy fruits of penance; supply what was wanting; henceforth, directing all things to the glory of God, advance with fear and love.

Have confidence, my son; I who desire not that anyone should perish, will show thee mercy.

CHAPTER II

THE PRIESTHOOD

WHAT is man, my son, and for what purpose was he created? Was it not that he should fear God, keep his commandments, adore him and serve him alone?

What art thou, my son? Why wast thou made a priest? Surely for this purpose, that in this most excellent work thou shouldst be placed over men to lead them to fear, adore and worship me. O grand dignity! O sublime ministry!

I am in heaven, my son; men are upon earth; and thou art midway between me and them that thou mayst direct them in my name, that they may obey you, as they would me.

I am God, the Creator; men are my creatures; thou art placed over them that thou mayst induce them to render to me the things that are mine.

I am the Father of Lights; men are in darkness; thou art a candle set in the

midst that through thee the true light may enlighten them.

I am the Giver of Heavenly Gifts; men are poor; thou art a dispenser that through thee grace may be given to everyone.

I am the Lord Most Holy; men are sinners and thou art a mediator, that through thee they may be reconciled with me.

I am the Father of the Unbegotten Son from all eternity; men are my adopted children in time; thou art a father on earth that through thee they may be adopted in heaven.

I am to be honored by sacrifices; men have not a victim for the holocaust; thou betwixt me and them hast a most holy victim already prepared, none other than the body of my Son, that thou mayst satisfy my justice and atone for the sins of men.

I am a burning fire; men upon earth are to be inflamed, and it is through thee that they are to be kindled.

I am the great Physician; men are ill; thou art a minister possessing my reme-

dies that thou mayst distribute them to each.

Lastly, I am the Lord of the fold in heaven; there is a fold on earth; thou art a pastor placed over it that through thee it may prosper and increase.

There is not, my son, there is not under heaven a dignity or a power that can compare with thine. Thou art of the gods and of the sons of the Most High.

Human is the dignity of a king; divine that of a priest. When a king dies, honors and power forsake him; when a priest dies, his priesthood remains forever.

A king commands men, a priest God himself; a powerful king conquers his enemies; a true priest overcomes the world.

A king can imprison the body or otherwise punish it; a priest can bind the soul itself.

A king can free captives from bodily chains; a priest can free souls from the tyranny of the devil and the snares of sin.

A king can do nothing save on earth; a priest is powerful in heaven itself.

A king may possess the treasures of the world; a priest holds those of heaven.

A king may send gifts to kings; a priest holds aloft sacrifice to the God of heaven; a king offers gold; a priest offers God himself.

His voice penetrates the heavens whence he draws graces; there he appeases and moves God; there he exercises judgment over men.

In very truth his sentence precedes the sentence of God; whatsoever he loosens or binds is loosened or bound in heaven.

O my son, recognize thy dignity and being made a sharer in the divine nature, do not fall back into thy first vileness, do not return to thy former conversation.

O Lord, who am I that thou shouldst be mindful of me and bestow so many gifts upon me?

Behold I, who am but dust and ashes, am made a man of God, thy minister according to the dispensation of thy grace.

O most loving Father, what love do I not owe thee for that love with which thou hast thus first loved me, thus chosen me, thus signed me!

How should I not humble myself for such a condescension, whereby thou hast raised me up a pauper from the dust that I might assist before the throne of thy glory, exercise thy functions, judge in thy place, loose and bind!

I, who am worthless, defiled, ignorant, imperfect, stupid, ever prone to evil; I, the most wretched of men, must exercise the functions of thine infinite majesty.

Strengthen me, O Lord, with thy grace that I may worthily bear such a burden.

Deign, O my God, to so dispose my soul interiorly, so to regulate my manners exteriorly that I may be a true imitator of thy most holy Son, that I may worthily represent before the faithful him who has sent me as thou hast sent him.

Thou shalt be an imitator of him, my son, if as he willed and strove, so thou

also willest and strivest to seek and to save that which was lost.

Come, my son, come and follow him, and be after him a fisher of men.

Preach the gospel to the poor, make the deaf to hear the word, the blind to see the true light, the dumb to declare the praises of God; make the lame to walk in the way of my commandments, the erring to return to the narrow path of justice; cause glory to be given to God and salvation to men.

My Son has shed his blood for them; do thou devote thyself wholly to them.

Enlarge thy heart, my son, call all to the knowledge of truth and salvation; compel all to enter my house that it may be filled.

The poor and the rich, the noble and the ignoble, the wise and the foolish, the servant and the master, male and female without distinction of persons strive to draw to me.

CHAPTER III

THE NECESSITY OF PERFECTION IN PRIESTS

SON, behold thou hast been made a priest. Thou hast not lightened thy burden. On the contrary thou hast now become bound by a stricter tie of discipline.

Walk therefore before me and be perfect; be holy as I am holy who sanctify thee; be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Thou errest, son, thou errest if thou believest that I look for such perfection only in those who by religious vows have left all things, consecrated themselves to me, and absolutely separated themselves from the world.

They, indeed, should be perfect, but, since they are not now in the world and no longer move amidst the scandals, they can more easily preserve themselves free from stain and thus serve me in holiness and justice without such severe conflicts and such violent exertions.

If thou wishest to be perfect thou hast

need of greater diligence. Thou art in the world; thou movest in the midst of dangers; thou hast enemies on the right hand and on the left; and nevertheless thou must pass through them unhurt, remain just, yea become daily more and more justified and holy.

Religious indeed must possess their vessel in honor; but thou, the salt of the earth, must preserve the earth itself, that is, men, from corruption.

Religious should be a salt unto themselves, but thou not only to thyself but to the fold; thou must strive to be a model to thy flock.

Hear, therefore, son, I have said to thee and again I say it: be perfect.

O Lord, I know indeed that the stars themselves are not pure in thy sight, and how can I be as perfect as becomes a minister assisting daily at thy table?

Oh, how pure should be the mouth, how clean the body, how perfect the heart into which God himself, purity itself, sanctity itself, sublimity itself, deigns so frequently to enter.

And how should I not tremble, O Lord, when I remember that Aaron, a priest of the Old Law, was obliged to be holy and perfect while he was but given charge over the ark of the covenant and the vessels of the tabernacle; but I for thee thyself, O my God, have been ordained.

He touched but the loaves of proposition; but I must not only touch but consecrate the bread of angels.

Aaron was restricted to those low and needy elements, those shadows of future things, and yet his tribe was ordered to be separated from the other tribe.

How much more should I, consecrated to the good things foreshadowed, to the truth prefigured, to the very mysteries of God, be separated from the ordinary people by the holiness of my life?

So it is, my son, I have chosen thee from the world; I have separated thee from the world; I have been made the portion of thine inheritance and of thy chalice. Thou art in the world, but now thou must not be of the world.

Give not heed, therefore, to the affairs and the thoughts of the multiude; entangle thyself with no desires, impede thyself with no hindrances.

Care only for what is mine; devote thyself to the management of heavenly things; let thy conversation be in heaven.

I have left thee on earth among men, it is true; but for what purpose? Listen, my son: that thou shouldst save them, that thou shouldst enkindle my love in them, that thou shouldst enrich them with my grace and draw them with thee to heavenly things.

Thou art, it is true, on earth, but thou art of heaven, thou belongest to heaven; in truth thou must be the heaven of souls; for just as the earth is made to flourish and to bear fruit through the rain from heaven, so through thee souls live and are daily made more perfect.

Be therefore to them a lofty heaven by contemplation, a spacious heaven by charity, a beautiful heaven by thy wisdom; a heaven well-ordered by obedience, serene by constancy, fruitful by instruction; a brilliant heaven by thy

good example, a generous heaven by thy mercy, a most pure heaven by thy sanctity.

Thus shall I, the God of heaven, be thy God, ever with thee in whatever thou undertakest; thou shalt plant, thou shalt water and I will give the increase.

CHAPTER IV

THE POSSIBILITY OF ACQUIRING PERFECTION IN THE WORLD

O LORD, I have heard thy word and I have feared; I have given ear to thy speech and I have trembled.

Thou hast said through thy Son: Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. Oh, what a height, and how shall I ever reach it?

Give to me, O Lord, wings like the dove and I will fly. But if thou turnest thy face from me, my soul shall remain humbled down to the dust, my bowels glued to the earth.

How, O Lord, shall I restrain so many passions ever fighting against my spirit? How shall I overcome so many vices ready to encounter me on every side? How shall I practice so many virtues opposed to the law of my members?

Behold, thou commandest that I should be pure in the midst of corruption, humble in the midst of honors, poor in the midst of riches, unconquered in the midst of enemies.

Thou commandest that living in the world I should not be of the world, that dwelling on earth I should be of heaven.

O Lord, I have heard thy word and I have feared; I have given ear to thy speech and I have trembled.

Be not afraid, my son. True it is that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away.

Great indeed is the burden of a priest, but great is the grace of him that imposes it. I, the Almighty, have placed this burden upon thee; I, the Almighty, will aid thee that thou mayst be able to bear it easily.

Shall anything be difficult to me, or shall I be like to one saying and not doing?

Dost thou fear enemies? I am the Lord of armies. Dost thou fear dangers? I will sustain those who trust in me.

I protected Abraham in Chaldea, Joseph in Egypt, Lot in Sodom, Job in the midst of unbelievers, Daniel in the midst of lions.

St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis of Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, and innumerable others who now rejoice in my glory, I have sanctified in the midst of sinners.

Consider, my son, that I have willed that all these in the midst of a perverse nation should become perfect, that thou mayst learn that no one, no matter what his vocation may be, should become discouraged.

Be of good heart, therefore, my son; do what in thee lies, and I will supply, direct and perfect.

Behold, O Lord, I come that I may do thy will; I wish to be perfect, but for this great grace is necessary.

Thou hast promised this to thy friends, but I, unworthy as I am, who have so often merited thine anger, how can I securely hope to obtain a gift that thou offerest to thy friends?

How shall I who have so often succumbed to lesser dangers, be able to avoid greater ones?

O Lord, perhaps it were better for me

and safer to flee from the scandals of the world to which thou hast said *Woe*, and retire into solitude. There I may embrace the religious state in which a man is surer of becoming holy and perfect.

What troubles thee, my son? Is a light brought forth that it may be placed under a bushel or under a couch? Is it not rather that it be placed upon a candlestick?

Thou hast not chosen me, my son, but I have chosen thee and have appointed thee that thou shouldst go forth and bear fruit in patience. I promise thee my grace.

Thou sayest that thou art unworthy; knowest thou not that grace is not given on account of merit; otherwise it would not be grace.

Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep. In so doing thou wilt show forth love, and to those that love me all things work together for good, even dangers themselves and enemies.

Feed my sheep; in doing so thou wilt

love and by loving thou wilt make progress and become perfect.

Feed my sheep; in doing so thou wilt imitate the good pastor, Jesus, my Son.

They indeed are perfected and predestined whom I have foreknown to be conformable to his image.

CHAPTER V

THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING PERFECTION

SON, dost thou wish to be perfect? Hunger and thirst after justice and thou shalt have thy fill; be a man of desires and the spirit of wisdom will come to thee.

If thou ardently desirest perfection, this strong desire will be a spur to urge thee on from virtue to virtue, until at last thou arrivest at the summit of the mount of Sion where thou wilt enjoy an intimate union with thy God.

Desire therefore vehemently; purpose firmly, and renew this desire and this purpose from day to day and from hour to hour. Thus, in a short time thou shalt be enkindled, in a short time thou shalt be on fire.

If thou wishest to be perfect in all thy works, study to please me alone; let the pure intention of my good pleasure and of my love ever precede all thine acts.

If thus thou takest care ever to act from the desire of pleasing me, know

that thou lovest me with all thy mind and with all thy strength.

Then thou shalt live, then thou shalt live the perfect life; for he who loves has fulfilled the law.

Beware, my son, lest thou do thy justice before men, that thou mayst be seen and have praise from them. Thou shalt receive glory from them it is true, but thou shalt cast aside perfection.

Beware, my son, of conducting thyself negligently in my service; he is not perfect but accursed who does the work of God carelessly.

If thou wishest to be perfect strive, my son, to realize that I am ever present with thee and thou art ever before my eyes.

Ever remember that I am a God who sees all things, and who searches the heart and the reins.

If therefore thou speakest, thou thinkest, thou desirest anything or dost anything, think, speak, purpose and act in my presence.

Thus like Abraham, Enoch and Noe thou shalt walk before me in truth and a perfect heart.

If thou wishest to be perfect, take care, my son, to so conduct thyself in all thy works as if thou wert immediately to die, as if it were the last act of thy life.

Oh, if thou wert to do this, my son, with what fervor wouldst thou celebrate Mass, with what compunction wouldst thou deplore thy sins, with what attention wouldst thou pray.

I do not ask of you, my son, great and impossible things that thou mayst become perfect.

Thou art a priest; thou shouldst pray, examine thy conscience, administer the sacraments, read thine office, say Mass. Do this perfectly and thou shalt be perfect.

If thou wishest to be perfect, often consider, my son, why hast thou come hither or why wast thou made a priest: was it not to please me and more surely work out thy salvation?

Arouse thyself by this thought and be ever inspired by it, proceed, ever begin anew, cast away lukewarmness, conquer thy passions, restrain thine inordinate appetites.

If thou strivest to attain perfection, perfection shall be reputed to thee.

If nevertheless thou failest, if thou makest less progress than thou desirest, do not be discouraged. Not to have found thyself perfect for thee will be perfection.

Diligently consider the obstacles which prevent thee from advancing and making progress. Remove these.

See what is the origin of thy vices, of thine imperfections, for they always have some radical source.

Behold Goliath; slay him and thou hast conquered. That is to say, give all thine attention to eradicating this capital sin.

See, my son, the merchants intent upon gain, see how from day to day they add something to their wealth; thus shouldst thou daily add something to the treasure which thou layest up for thyself in heaven.

See the artists how they daily perfect the pictures which they have painted; so shouldst thou correct thy vices, increase thy virtues.

They indeed labor, my son, to obtain

a corruptible crown, but thou an incorruptible one.

Grant, O Lord, that I may make progress as thou commandest, that I may gauge myself without guile or flattery.

Grant, O Lord, that I may always be displeased with what I am and that I may attain to what I as yet am not; grant that I may not turn back, nor remain stationary; for I know that if I shall say *Enough*, I shall have failed.

CHAPTER VI

THE GRAVITY OF SIN IN A PRIEST

WHAT, my son, is the sin exceeding great in my sight? Surely, it is the sin of my priests.

On account of it I will arouse my anger, I will pour forth the wrath of my indignation; on account of it I will light a fire in Sion.

O Lord, I will speak to thee since I am but dust and ashes.

I know, O Lord, that thou art not an accepter of persons, that in thy sight there is neither barbarian nor stranger, Greek nor Scythian, male nor female.

I know that all are but one in Christ Jesus. Why, therefore, art thou more incensed against an offending priest? Why, therefore, dost thou spare him less?

My son, it is true indeed that with me there is no acceptance of persons; neither the rich more than the poor, the king more than the subject, the wise man

more than the fool is anything in my sight.

In truth, I am just and I know how to measure the weight of iniquity, to judge and to punish.

It is just that I should be more incensed against an offending priest, for his iniquity is greater.

Hear, my son, how great is his sin. It were indeed a great crime if one of the common people should dare to despise the commands of an excellent king and insolently rise up and bear arms against him.

But greater surely would be the crime if the very minister of the king and administrator of his goods should do this.

Mark the parable, my son. When a priest sins, despises my commands and refuses to obey, then boldly rising up he says: I will not serve.

And what, my son, is this recalcitrant and rebellious priest? He is my minister and the dispenser of my mysteries. O iniquity exceeding great in my sight!

It were a great crime if a son, despis-

ing the authority of an excellent father, should go into a distant country and there live riotously.

It were surely a greater crime if a wife should abandon her lawful spouse to live with another man.

Mark, my son, the parable. The soul of the priest was espoused to me by a vow in ordination, but by committing sin it abandons me and gives itself up to the world, the flesh or the devil, my most deadly enemies. O most wretched soul! O adulterous spouse! who prefers sin and the devil himself to her Divine Consort. O iniquity exceeding great in my sight!

Great was the crime of the Jews who demanded my death and laid violent hands upon me.

But surely greater was the crime of Judas, who, though he was my apostle, conspired with them to sell me and to betray me.

This, my son, is not a parable but the very truth which I declare to you.

Surely, thou knowest how great is the crime of Christian people when by sin

they crucify me again and make a mockery of me.

Understand therefore how great is the crime of a priest who, by committing sin, lays violent hands upon me. O iniquity exceeding great in my sight!

Amen, amen, I say to you! I bear much from other sinners and from wicked men; but nothing gives me greater pain than the bad example of a sinful priest.

Wherefore, wonder not if the ire of my justice is more inflamed against them, if I cry out with a loud voice: Let death come upon them and let them descend living into hell.

I will bear with enemies who curse me but not with friends who turn against me. Let wicked priests therefore tremble, for I will judge them more severely than the rest of men.

Let them remember Nadab and Abiu; they were my ministers; I saw them placing strange fire in their censers and immediately I sent fire from heaven upon them and they were consumed.

Let them remember Oza the Levite; I

saw him treat in an unworthy manner the ark of my covenant and I struck him, whilst I spared the Philistines who rashly laid hands upon it.

Let them remember the sons of Heli; I saw their abomination and I visited them with death.

O my son, let thee thyself remember and fear my judgment and tremble at my anger; watch, flee from sin.

Open, O Lord, open my heart and pour into it more and more of the horror of sin and of the hatred of iniquity; pierce my flesh with thy fear that I may not sin against thee.

Yet consider, O Lord, my weakness so prone to evil. I am a priest it is true; but I am also a man conceived in sin.

Aid me, direct me, hold my right hand and lead me according to thy will.

Consider, O Lord, the fury of Satan who ever goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Save me from this enemy.

To thee do I fly, O my God; unless thou guard me, in vain shall I watch, in

vain shall I attempt to protect myself.

In thee do I trust; protect me, watch over me that I may not perish in my infirmity.

CHAPTER VII

THE EVILS ARISING FROM A WICKED LIFE IN A PRIEST

WEEPING I have wept, my son, and the tears are upon my cheeks; because my friend, whom I placed over all my goods, has become cruel to me.

Attend, my son, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow.

I purchased sheep from my Father with the price of my blood. These I love with an everlasting love, and therefore I entrusted them to my servant that in my name and in my charity he might rule them, serve them, and save them.

I said to him: Friend, I commit my sheep to thy care, lead them forth, go before them, know them, lay down thy life for them.

Other sheep I have that are not yet of this fold that I entrust to thee; bring them also that there may be one fold and one shepherd.

I have said to my sheep: Follow this pastor, hear his voice; follow not the stranger but flee from him.

What has happened, my son? That servant, to whom I so lovingly entrusted my sheep, has become as a mercenary, who hath no care for the sheep.

He saw the wolf coming and he left the sheep and fled.

He ought to have led them into the rich pastures of faith; he ought to have instructed them, to have catechised them, to have preached to them.

But he neglected to do so; hence the famine. In a short time I have seen the faces of my flock so emaciated that I scarcely recognized them.

He ought to have visited my sheep and to have known the countenance of each by the assiduous hearing of confessions.

He did not do so; hence in a short time disease and wounds have increased and many have died, for there was no one to care for them.

He ought to have carefully guarded the flock and to have gone after those that had strayed away; but he was not vigilant, he was not solicitous for my sheep and they are scattered.

These sheep, my son, are souls left by

a wicked priest in ignorance, in sin, and in error.

Yea more, my son, that wicked servant has become a thief and a robber. He himself has wounded and killed my sheep, for whom I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

He himself sinned and thus caused souls to perish; for they saw him sinning and they said: He is the angel of the Lord, knowing good and evil; why are we more obliged than he to fear God, keep his commandments, and flee from sin?

Is what is lawful for him, not lawful for us? May we not do what he does? Let us go after him and follow in his footsteps.

Thus by his example souls are led into evil and hardened in vice and crime.

But, my son, the dregs of the bitter chalice of his cruelty are not yet exhausted.

Hear, ye heavens, and wonder and let the powers of heaven shudder at this.

My sheep perceive that his morals are not in conformity with his doctrine; now

they doubt whether he thinks the dogmas which he teaches are true, whether he himself believes them, or if they are really true. Now they say to themselves: This teacher, this pastor, this apostle does not believe; why should I believe? He does not fear hell; why should I fear it? Hence unbelief, hence impiety.

Thus, my son, through an evil prophet has corruption overspread the world.

O priest, not a pastor but a seducer of my flock! An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth shall this most wicked man restore.

O wicked priests! of how many and how great evils have you been the cause!

What have I not suffered from your leader Judas, who betrayed me to the Jews that they might crucify me? What from Arius, who laid waste my whole Church? What from Luther, who led into error and into perdition so large a portion of my flock? What from so many other priests who have fostered schism and heresy?

O wicked priests, through whom so many scandals have come, through

whom so many peoples, so many nations have fallen away from the faith and from the unity of my Church, unjustly imputing your crimes to my most chaste Spouse!

On account of you, on account of your evil deeds, the world is laid waste by the sword and perishes by the destroyer.

Woe to you, brood of vipers! the depths of hell will swallow you up before the rest of sinners, and the mouth of the pit of torment will reach out with greater fury to receive you than others.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BLESSINGS THAT PROCEED FROM THE HOLY LIVES OF PRIESTS

BLESSED is the nation, blessed is the people to whom the Lord has given a pastor after his own heart!

Under his rule the crooked ways become straight, the rough ways plain and all flesh sees the salvation of God.

The fields are filled with plenty, the beautiful places of the wilderness grow fat, and the hills are girded about with joy.

Blessed world, that received from a most merciful Lord the twelve apostles!

Behold, my son, the power, the force, the influence of a holy priest. Mark you, they were but twelve and their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Though they were lambs, they conquered a world full of wolves; though they were but simple fishermen, they illuminated by their teachings a world shrouded in darkness.

Though they were without staff or weapon, they overturned idols and temples; though they were of lowly birth, they are honored by the world itself.

But they were holy; they were without stain, rich in chastity, assiduous in prayer, devoted to their ministry, imitators of Christ, filled with his spirit and his zeal.

O blessed land that possessed the twelve apostles! Alas, wretched world of to-day, that languishes under the ministry of so many thousands of priests!

Happy city of Milan, which when it abounded in vice and ignorance, received a St. Charles for its pastor!

He labored to reform the clergy, and many priests, as from death to life, were raised from the depths of vice to the height of sanctity.

He devoted himself to the laity, and a people that had sat in darkness and the shadow of death, walked in the way of truth and virtue.

That city was almost wholly changed and renewed, and even in the country roundabout St. Charles destroyed the

rule of Satan and firmly established the Kingdom of Christ.

At last he departed from this earth, filling the whole world with the fame of his sanctity, and even to this day sanctifying it by the incentive to emulate his virtues.

Such is the ardor of sanctity in a priest that scarcely anyone can conceal himself from its warmth.

Blessed Chablais, that welcomed a St. Francis of Sales! How many did he not rescue from heresy! How many did he not direct in the path of piety! How many did he not force to enter heaven itself by his meekness!

Thrice fortunate people of the Indies, who had St. Francis Xavier for an apostle! How many kingdoms, how many rulers, how many peoples he drew to the faith of Christ, tongue can scarcely tell.

Happy France, that possessed a St. Vincent de Paul! How many poor through him had the gospel preached to them! How many sinners were converted! How many ignorant instructed! How many weak strengthened in the

faith! How many children catechised! How many priests sanctified!

Behold, my son, how much a true and holy priest can accomplish, who is devoted to prayer, the preaching of the word, and to example.

These are given thee as models, and their example should be more powerful to induce thee to make progress in virtue than that of the number of the lukewarm to become relax.

See how they fulfilled the ministry which thou thyself hast received, and strive to accomplish it in like manner.

Mark, how they attracted the attention of all by their sanctity, how they preached the word of God, how often and how well they prayed.

How edifying were they in their dress, carriage and speech; how dignified and reserved in their behavior; how meek and humble in their conversation; how mortified and merciful; how little solicitous about temporal matters, but how zealous for the things that are eternal!

See and do thou in like manner. Do and teach like them, and with them thou shalt be great in the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER IX

DEATH

WHO is the man that lives and will not see death? Surely no one, my son, for thou knowest from experience that there is no one who lives forever.

Therefore priest though thou be, and of the gods and of the sons of the Most High, thou shalt die like the rest of men, and that indeed in the day thou reckonest not, in the hour thou apprehendest not and in the manner thou knowest not.

Quickly he draws nigh to thee, my son, he who rides upon the pale horse and whose name is Death. Soon thou shalt be among the slain.

Perhaps thou givest little thought to him, that thou believest him as yet far away; but there is only a step between you.

In a moment he will rush upon thee, and then what will it profit thee to have gained the whole world, if thou hast not attended to the salvation of thy soul?

Oh, how thine eyes shall be opened

when thou shalt hear the rider cry out with a dreadful voice: Thine end has come, thine end has come!

Then the days of the longest life will seem to thee as a shadow, that quickly passes.

Then riches and wealth, honors and dignities, delights and pleasures will appear to thee wholly vain and empty.

Then thou wilt confess that it was madness to have placed thy hope in these things, which death in a moment may snatch from thee.

Then thou wilt realize that to lay up treasures in heaven alone is wisdom.

Then thou wilt weep for having abused so many graces; for having resisted so many holy inspirations.

Then thou wilt lament that thou hadst ot by good works made certain thy election, or at least hadst not aspired to a higher degree of perfection.

Then thy sins shall rise up before thee like an army exceeding great; and fear and trembling shall come upon thee.

Then thou shalt be troubled even about thy good works, and dread shall seize

thee, not knowing whether thou art worthy of love or hate.

Then thou shalt be anxious not only about thine own soul, but also the souls of thy flock for whom thou art to render an account.

Then many of thine actions, which at another time appeared to thee right and good, thou wilt perceive to be evil.

In many of them thou wilt recognize the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, the pride of life, or at least the impulse of nature; in few thou wilt find perfection.

Then thou wilt see thy faults of vanity, of self-indulgence, of sloth, of ambition, of envy and ill-will.

Then thou wilt remember thy neglect of prayer, thy lukewarmness in performing thy spiritual exercises, thy putting off of confession, thy negligences in the celebration of holy Mass.

Then shall come to thy mind, so many of thy flock ignorant and not instructed, straying and not sought after, sinning and not reproved, weak and not strengthened.

What shalt thou say then, wretched

man? Say it to-day and thou shalt be safe.

Say: O death, thy judgment is good. As I should then feel I wish to feel now; as I should then act I wish to act now; I will put my house in order while living, lest dying I may be unable to do so.

In future I will refrain myself even from the appearance of evil; I will do nothing that might trouble me in that terrible hour.

While I have time I will do good; I will sow, I will reap, I will gather; that when the Lord shall come to demand an account of my stewardship, as a faithful servant, I may appear before him with joy, carrying my sheaves.

But, my son, be not like the man considering his natural countenance in a glass, who looks at himself, goes his way and immediately forgets what manner of man he is.

That is to say, it is not sufficient to meditate once or twice upon this salutary thought of death, make resolutions of amendment and immediately forget them.

Ever think of death and ever bring

forth a new determination to prepare for it, not in the future but now and in earnest.

Blessed, thrice blessed is he who keeps the hour of his death ever before his eyes.

My saints understood this and for that reason took care to recall to their minds, by all possible means, the thought of death; one by contemplating the remains of the departed, another by looking into a grave, another by lying in his coffin.

But thou, a priest, hast no need of extraordinary warnings to recall frequently to thy mind the thought of death.

Scarcely a day passes in which is not vouchsafed to thee a reminder of thy last hour.

At one time thou art called to administer the last sacraments to a sick man, at another to assist a dying person, at another to bury the dead or to say Mass for the repose of their souls.

If the bell rings it announces a funeral, if thou openest thy breviary to say the office, the prayers for the departed stare thee in the face, if thou

celebratest Mass thou makest a commemoration for the dead.

In a word, death ever presents itself to thee; I have so decreed: and why?

Because, since on account of thine exalted position thou art more exposed to dangers than others, and since it is thus necessary for thee to attend more frequently to thy last end, I have wished that there should be for thee in thy sacred ministry, an almost perpetual incentive to this most salutary thought and remembrance of death.

Do not therefore close or turn away the eyes of thy mind, when this sad indeed but necessary picture presents itself to thee.

Harden not the ears of thy heart against its voice; but on the contrary listen attentively, drink in and treasure in thy bosom its eloquence, that thy flesh may remain transfixed by my fear.

Are not these priests, my son, stupid and foolish who, ever moving among the dead, scarcely ever think of death and are made by habit almost insensible to its ever-present menace.

They are everywhere associated with death and yet they live as if they were never to die; they cling to the perishable goods of this world as if these things would last forever; and even when they are ill, when they are at the point of death they will scarcely believe their brother priest when he says to them: Put thy house in order, for thou art going to die.

O my son, such as was their life, such is their death: a life indeed according to the flesh and a death almost always, for lack of preparation, sudden.

Far be it from thee, my son, far be it from thee, this forgetfulness of thy last end and the mourning that it entails! Daily die in spirit like St. Paul, and thou shalt rejoice with him when thou shalt be liberated from the body of this death.

CHAPTER X

THE LAST JUDGMENT

AFTER death, my son, thou shalt sleep in the dust of the earth: but thou shalt wake, thou shalt rise, thou shalt come into the valley of Josaphat, when I shall sit there to judge all nations.

There in thy flesh thou shalt behold me, and I will search thy reins and thy heart.

I will bring to light the hidden things of thy darkness, and make manifest the counsels of thy heart; I will weigh thee in the balance and render to thee according to thy works.

Then, my son, will be the end of all things, the reward of all virtue, the punishment of all sin.

Understand what I say to thee and wisely look to thyself, that in that day thou mayst be confident and happy.

I have often said to thee, my son: Despise worldly things; for the world passes away and the concupiscence thereof. Love not the world nor the

things that are in the world for the figure of this world shall pass.

Dost thou will, my son, to observe this commandment that I have so often insisted upon? Dost thou wish to conquer thine evil nature ever drawing thee forcibly towards these sensible things?

Have frequently in thy mind that last hour when the elements and the entire universe dissolved in flames shall crumble to naught.

Picture to thyself in thine innermost soul that thou already seest terrible signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars; that amid the din of earthquakes and the confusion of the roaring of the sea thou hearest the sound of the last trumpet.

Surely then thine old nature, withering away for fear and expectation of the judgment that shall come upon thee, shall no longer dare to lust so strongly against the spirit.

Certainly thou shalt not say: It is good for us to be in this world: let us make here our most delightful abode, when thou realizest that this world is not a lasting city.

All the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof thou shalt not esteem of real worth, when thou considerest that they shall pass into nothingness.

Assuredly thou shalt not be overcome by the desire of honors, when thou thinkest of that day in which every man shall be humbled.

Thou shalt not desire to lay up treasures on earth, when thou rememberest that all riches shall vanish in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Surely thou shalt not indulge thy flesh, when thou foreseest that that flesh will be thy worst enemy in the day of judgment.

Look to the end and thou shalt esteem all earthly things as dross; and shalt be eager to gain heaven alone.

Look to the end and thou shalt say: Yea Lord, I have seen that all is vanity save to love thee and to sanctify myself and others; he alone is blessed whom thou shalt find so doing in that hour.

Picture to thyself often, my son, that thou seest at thy side priests rising from their graves; some who are saints, in joy, in glory, in brightness and in incorrup-

tion, but others who were wicked, in filth, in disgrace, in sorrow, in pain and bitter anguish.

Be not affrighted by these, but let the example of the others incite thee to virtue; and moved by such a spectacle say wisely to thyself: O my soul, behold how good it is for a priest to do, to teach and to bear the yoke of the Lord!

Behold what honor redounds to those whose life was esteemed by worldlings to be madness; behold how they are numbered among the sons of God, and their lot is among his saints.

O blessed priests, crowned with double honor! Let us run after them, my soul, as the stag to the fountains of waters.

Let us run after them, in patience, in tribulations, in necessities, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in longanimity, in meekness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity not feigned.

Let us run after them through glory and ignominy, through evil report and good report.

O my soul! Let us hold to the word

of truth as they did; let us possess the armor of justice with which they fought on the right hand and on the left.

If thy soul still holds back, if it refuses the holy labor, proceed and say: See, my soul, whither leadeth the cowardice and perversity of a wicked priest.

Behold how terrible it is after a sinful life, to fall into the hands of the living God.

See how the crimes of a priest remain with him, how he carries his own iniquities and the sins of others.

O my soul, let us draw away from these wicked ones, let us examine the commandments of our God and do his will with a noble and generous heart.

Beware of the snares of the devil, of evil desires that would drag us down with these to perdition.

Again, my son, often picture to thyself that thou already seest my sign appearing in the heavens, my cross flaming from afar, and say: Behold the balance in which I shall be weighed! O blessed shall I be if transfixed upon it I may find my Saviour.

Blessed shall I be if, through it, I should be made conformable to the image of the Son of God! Then indeed I may with confidence draw nigh to Christ, my Judge.

But, wretched me, if by my sins I should have again crucified Jesus!

O wretched me, if I should have profaned that blood poured out for me upon the cross!

O wretched me, if by a carnal life I should have been an enemy to the cross of Christ!

O my soul! Let us deny ourselves; let us take up our cross and follow Jesus; let us suffer with him that in the resurrection we may be glorified together with him.

Lastly, my son, picture to thyself that thou seest me the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty.

Priests are standing in my presence, some on my right hand upon thrones judging the tribes of my people, others indeed upon my left with the devil and his angels.

Behold, the books are opened that the dead may be judged by the things that are written therein.

Mark you, how there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed, nothing secret that shall not be found out.

Hearken to those most sweet words of the Judge to the holy priests: O blessed of my Father! my friends who have done all things that I commanded you;

Faithful servants, who have borne the burden of the day and the heats; who, mindful that whatever you do to the least of my members you do unto me, have through so much labor and fatigue, so many words and examples, so many prayers and sacraments, given food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, assisted the weak, clothed the naked and liberated those who were in prison;

Come, blessed sons, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Shalt thou not say then, my son: Farewell, world; farewell, all worldly things; far be it from me to entangle myself any more in earthly affairs? Hence-

forth I will fight for God alone by true piety and a faithful discharge of my ministry.

Courage, my soul! If the labor affrights thee, how much more does the reward invite thee!

But hear, my son, what is said to the wicked priests:

O cursed sons of perdition, who had the name of being alive and ye were dead! Blush now for shame and be confounded.

Hear your disgrace proclaimed before your face: let the people, whom I entrusted to you know, let all men know how full ye were of deceit and falsehood.

Let them know your sacrileges and crimes; let them know that vengeance is mine and that I will repay.

Go, most abandoned and accursed of men: depart from me into eternal fire!

O my son, certainly to many priests this terrible sentence shall be addressed. Shalt thou be one of them?

Fear, my son, and if thy heart reprehend thee in anything, immediately and without delay, whilst yet thou hast light,

come before my presence, with thanksgiving, with penance and every good work.

CHAPTER XI

HELL

THOU knowest, my son, that sinners shall go into eternal fire, there to burn and to be tormented forever with the devil and his angels.

Thou knowest this, thou believest this; at my command thou preachest this terrible truth to my people.

Verily thou knowest also, my son, that it was not alone for the punishment of the wicked members of the laity, but more especially for evil priests and bad pastors that this place of torment was established.

For it was created for Lucifer and his companions, that there the more mighty might be more mightily tormented.

O thou, another Lucifer, who by the sublimity of thy calling art of the heavens heavenly! Fear lest like the first Lucifer thou fall and be one day cast down with him into the burning pit.

O thou, who art rich with the treasures of heaven! Fear lest abusing these,

dying thou be buried like the rich man in hell.

O thou, to whom were committed the most precious talents of the priesthood! Fear lest like the useless servant thou be cast out into exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Where is he, my son, where is Judas? Where are the other priests who imitated him and who like him died in their sins?

Where? They are buried in hell, where they lie the deeper down, the higher the place they should have occupied in heaven.

There they are filled with shame, who on earth enjoyed a high degree of honor.

There they are despised, mocked and trampled upon by Satan, who on earth were revered by men and angels.

There they drink of the gall of vipers and of the poison of asps, who received my blood unworthily at the altar.

There they are stung and tormented by the old serpent, who should have triumphed over him by their sacred ministry.

There they are poor and naked, who on earth enjoyed unearned luxuries.

There they are prodded with burning goads, who by their cowardice and sloth allowed my sheep to perish.

There they are covered with fetid pitch and sulphur who, in their highly spiritual and holy state, lived according to the flesh.

There their ears are wearied by horrible noises, who were unwilling to listen to penitents in the tribunal of mercy.

There they are in desolation, who refused to console my sorrowing people.

There they suffer bitter pain, who neither sympathized with nor aided those in trouble.

There their bodies are lacerated, who by their scandals were the murderers of souls.

There their cry is unheeded, who on earth neglected prayer and performed their duties carelessly.

There, in fine, they shall suffer the rigorous scourge of my justice, who have not kept my commandments which they announced to the people, and thereby

resisted more than others the Holy Spirit.

So it is, my son, they were my chosen ones, my friends, my ministers, endowed and enriched with my graces; and they rebelled against me and betrayed me, outraged my Holy Spirit and trampled me, their Saviour, under foot.

I will avenge myself more upon these than upon other sinners: the dregs of the chalice of my anger against them shall not be exhausted.

O my son! Fear me who can cast both body and soul into hell.

Behold, before thee is life and death, heaven and hell. Choose which thou wilt.

Shalt thou be able to dwell in a devouring fire, who canst scarcely endure the bite of an insect, a spark of fire or the prick of a needle?

Nevertheless, thou shalt dwell there if thou spendest thy days in worldly pleasures and dost not repent of it. This is indeed the wide road that leads to perdition.

Thou shalt dwell there if thou wilt

not do violence to nature; for only the violent, bearing away the kingdom of heaven, shall avoid hell.

Thou shalt dwell there if thou remainest slothful; for without labor there is no reward: the useless servant shall be cast out into exterior darkness.

Thou shalt dwell there if thou art not holy: the just alone enter into eternal life and are preserved from eternal fire.

My son, beware of thyself, attend to thyself: why dost thou delay? Thou knowest not what hour I, the Son of Man, shall come.

If I should come to-morrow, if to-morrow thou shouldst die, where wouldst thou go? Let thy heart make answer.

If to-day thou art deserving of hell, how shalt thou be worthy of heaven to-morrow?

My son, to-morrow is an uncertain day; and who knows if thou shalt see to-morrow?

CHAPTER XII

THE LAMENT OF THE LOST PRIEST

LISTEN, my son, to thy lost brother priest; but I will not say, have mercy on him, for thy pity cannot help him, since out of hell there is no redemption.

Listen to his cry: I am tormented in this flame. Why does he not say by this flame? because in addition to the pain of fire he endures another torment.

Mark his words: Oh, fool that I was! I have spent my days in the way of sin and perdition. I have walked by dangerous paths; but the way of the Lord that I have pointed out to others I have not followed.

O wretched me! What have pride and the wealth that I laid up for myself availed me? The false treasures that I loved have as a shadow passed away.

Oh, thrice unhappy that I am! Never shall I see the face of my loving Father in heaven. That was to have been my home but I shall never reach it. I thirst

and shall never drink; I hunger and I shall never eat. Nothing remains to me for all eternity but strife and clamor and grief.

Woe is me! Woe is me! My loss is my own work, the fruit of my sins.

O my soul! who bewitched thee that thou didst not obey the commandments of thy God which thou taughtest to others, that thou didst not respond to that grace that was ever knocking at thy door.

Often have I absolved the sins of others and my own are bound forever.

Often have I received and distributed to others the loving Lamb of God, and for myself changed him forever into an unplacable Judge.

Often have I rescued by the Holy Sacrifice the souls of the dead from the flames of purgatory and by that same Sacrifice I have buried my own in eternal flames.

Often have I deterred my people from sin by preaching to them the pains of the damned, and by my negligence and sins I have cast myself into those very flames.

Oh, that I had been wise! Oh, if I had but understood! Oh, that I had provided for my last end! Woe is me! Woe is me!

Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgments are right. There is nothing that thou oughtst to have done for my salvation that thou hast not done. My loss is my own doing.

Listen again. Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tips of his finger in water to cool my tongue.

Ye apostles and holy priests of whom I am the successor, send the many numbers of my flock that through my ministry have attained to companionship with you, that they may assist me.

What is the answer, my son? Listen. Remember that thou receivedst good things in thy lifetime and these, evil things and crosses. It is just that they should be now comforted and thou tormented. Between thee and us there is fixed a great chaos.

O grief! O mountain of sorrow! There is no longer hope of assistance or

of consolation, no chance to do penance, no prospect of redemption; but the awful burden of a wretched eternity alone remains.

O cruel worm! Those I have saved shall be happy for all eternity and I have perished by my own fault and shall be tormented forever.

Listen again, my son. Father Abraham, all ye glorious citizens of heaven, ye holy priests, I beseech you send someone to my brother priests who are still dwelling on earth, to warn them lest they also should come into this place of torments. If one went to them from the dead they would do penance.

What is the reply? If they will not hear Moses and the prophets neither would they believe one if he should rise again from the dead.

O my son! thou hast heard a terrible mystery. Such is the perversity of an evil priest that not even by a resurrection from the dead can he be led to penance and conversion.

Did not the chief priests and the scribes see Lazarus raised by me from the dead? They certainly did.

Nevertheless, since they would not believe in my words and in my works, neither did they believe in me at the sight of that man stepping forth from the tomb. On the contrary they became more enraged against me.

A bad priest certainly knows the truth, but he resists the warning of faith: he abounds in grace and he refuses to obey the movement of grace.

He becomes blinded and hardened and he dies in his blindness and obduracy and finally is lost forever.

Fear therefore, my son; again I say to thee, fear lest thou shouldst ever become like unto him.

To-day if thou hearest the voice of the Lord harden not thy heart against it: see if the way of iniquity is in thee and, if so, immediately remove it from thee.

Arise and enter by the narrow way which alone leads to life.

CHAPTER XIII

HEAVEN

MY son, I have ascended into heaven and sit forever at the right hand of my Father.

Ascend thou also: take to thee wings like the dove and fly.

In my Father's house there are many mansions. I have chosen one for thee: I have gone before to prepare this place for thee.

This shall be thy resting-place for all eternity: I have chosen it that one day thou mightst dwell therein and rest with me.

Come, my beloved, come into my garden: I shall be thy reward exceeding great.

O my son! if the eyes of thy heart were but enlightened: if thou but knew what is the hope of my vocation and the riches of the glory of my inheritance among the saints!

If thou but knew that heaven to which I call thee, yea into which I compel thee

to enter, thou wouldst indeed look forward to my coming and from now till the very last breath of thy life cry out unceasingly with a most ardent longing!

O good Father! may thy kingdom come to me! O Lord, give me its waters that I may no longer thirst.

Lord, open to me the gate of thy kingdom: my soul longeth and fainteth for thy courts.

Thou knowest, my son, how sweet is rest to him who is wearied by his daily labors.

Thou knowest how welcome to a sick man is relief from racking pain.

But however pleasing and delightful such a rest may appear to thee, it is not even a type of the repose that I have prepared for my soldiers.

Earthly rest is short and scarcely sufficient to renew one's strength for new labors; but mine is eternal and free forever from all disturbance.

Earthly peace is imperfect and does not relieve from human miseries; but

mine is absolute and bestows upon my saints surcease of all sorrow, grief, weeping and pain.

Earthly rest is a slight consolation to the wayfaring man; but mine is the eternal repose of the exultant soul: it is the joy of my own supreme beatitude.

O my son! when that happy hour arrives, when thou shalt enter into that holy rest, then in truth thou shalt be forever free from every necessity, fear and pain!

No longer shall there be for thee warring against flesh and blood, against the powers of darkness: no more shalt thou pass through many tribulations.

No longer shalt thou fear sin, dangers, poverty, hunger, persecution or the sword.

No longer shalt thou be troubled by solicitude for all the churches; no longer shalt thou cry out: Who is weak and I am not weak? who is scandalized and I am not on fire? Then thou shalt realize that these former things have passed away.

Is not, my son, this rest a fitting reward for thy labors? Therefore, in hope of

this peace, take up my yoke upon thee, and it will seem to thee sweet and light.

Knowest thou, my son, what it is to have thy most ardent desires fully satisfied?

Truly not; for such happiness is not of this world, where the heart of man is ever tormented by new longings.

At least, thou knowest what food is to the hungry man, drink to the thirsty, riches to the avaricious, honors to the proud, pleasures to the voluptuous. Among foolish men these things are reputed to be happiness.

But even though one should enjoy all these delights to the full, thinkest thou that such happiness could even foreshadow for thee the felicity of my saints?

No, my son, certainly not; for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things I have prepared for those that love me.

There the thirsty soul is inebriated with the plenty of my house and drinks of the torrent of my pleasure.

There it eats the most delicious fruit

of the tree of life; there it hears the voice of the harpers playing upon their harps and the singing of the new canticle before the throne of God.

There the just shine as the sun; there they exult as victors dividing the captured prize.

There no longer indeed through a glass in a dark manner, but face to face, I manifest to them myself, the Supreme Good.

O my son! if thou but knew those things, which are now hidden from thine eyes, but which shall be plain to thee when in my light thou shalt see light! if thou but knew—but enough.

I have yet many things to say to thee but thou canst not bear them now, for thou art yet without understanding.

Let it suffice for thee therefore, my son, that thou believest; it is enough for thee to know that eternal life is reserved for thee; that in that life man is truly happy; that in that life holy priests receive a much more glorious crown than all others.

Rejoice, my son, rejoice, because it

hath pleased me to give to thee this kingdom.

Rejoice if thou art meek: blessed art thou, for thou shalt possess the land of heaven.

Rejoice if thou weepest for thy sins and those of thy brethren: blessed art thou, for thou shalt be comforted for all eternity.

Rejoice if by thy zeal thou hungerest and thirstest after justice: blessed art thou, for thou shalt have thy fill.

Rejoice if thou hast diligently administered the sacrament of my mercy to sinners, blessed art thou, for thou shalt obtain mercy.

Rejoice if thou hast received me with a pure heart, and with a right intention hast sought nothing but my glory: blessed art thou, for thou shalt behold me.

Rejoice if thou hast striven to establish the peace of charity among the members of thy flock: blessed art thou, for thou shalt exult among the sons of God in heaven.

Rejoice if thou sufferest persecution

on account of thy faith and zeal: blessed art thou, for thine is my kingdom.

Rejoice if men revile thee and speak all that is evil against thee untruly for my sake: blessed art thou, for thy reward is very great in heaven.

Courage, faithful servant, convert sinners, faithfully labor in my vineyard; and I, the Lord of the vineyard and Chief of pastors, will go out to meet thee and place upon thy brow a never-fading crown of glory.

CHAPTER XIV

DEVOTION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

WHO art thou, my son? Verily, none other than the minister of Christ and the dispenser of his mysteries.

Oh, with what great love shouldst thou love him, who hath given thee such a signal mark of his affection!

With what great care oughtest thou to attend to the instructions and the commands of thy King, in order to execute them and to see that all comply with them!

With what great zeal oughtest thou to strive to please him in all things!

O man of Christ! put all else aside and carry with thee and retain Jesus alone, in thy soul and in thy heart and in thy works.

I have given thee a soul, my son, to guide thee in every word and act. And to what purpose ought thy soul to direct thy words and acts if not to the worship of Jesus and the fulfilling of his ministry?

Who is he who can enlighten thy mind to accomplish this, if not he who is the true light, my very wisdom itself, my well-beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?

O my son! consult him, hear him; that is to say, study unceasingly his holy doctrine, that his word may be a lamp to thy feet and a light to thy paths;

That preaching in his name thou mayst announce not thine but his gospel; that he, not thou, may speak by thy mouth.

If by reading and meditating upon his teachings thou canst bring him into thy heart and truly know Jesus Christ, thou shalt indeed be sufficiently learned for thine own needs and the needs of others.

His doctrine indeed surpasses all the teachings of the saints. His is the knowledge that the lips of the priest shall keep.

I have given thee a heart, my son, that thou mayst love. And whom shouldst thou love with all thy heart if not him who hath done so much for thee by taking thee into his ministry?

To whom shouldst thou adhere more closely than to my Son, the true vine of which thou art a branch?

How shalt thou bear fruit, unless by love thou abidest in the vine?

How canst thou live unless thou lovest him with whom thou art one body and member one of another?

O happy member! love thy head and never be animated by any spirit but his.

Love thy head, and never permit thyself to be separated from him, neither by persecution nor by the sword nor by any power nor by any passion.

Love thy head! and as a member naturally serves the body in all things faithfully, so do thou serve Jesus in all things with thy whole heart, by doing all for his glory.

Love thy head! and as a member offers itself and permits itself to be cut off for the welfare of the body, so do thou be ever ready to sacrifice thyself for Jesus.

Live the life of thy head; breathe his spirit; rejoice in his joys, sorrow in his sorrows.

Live by love in Jesus and Jesus in thee. Oh, with him how great progress shalt thou make! with him how well wilt thou sanctify thyself and through him sanctify others! How greatly shalt thou honor thy ministry!

Dost thou wish to please me, my son, and be beloved by me? Do according to the exemplar that I showed thee on the mount.

Imitate in all thine acts my well-beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Those I have predestined whom I have seen to be conformable to his image.

Let his life therefore be ever before thine eyes, that thou mayst be drawn by the cords of his love and run in the odor of his sweetness.

Behold the charity with which he hath loved me. He knew that the sacrifices and oblations of men were not pleasing to me; and he came down to earth to make atonement to me in his very person for the injuries that I have borne from men.

Behold his charity towards men: he bore their sins in his own body upon

the tree. Behold his humility: he emptied himself taking the form of a servant.

Behold his obedience: he was made obedient even unto death; he ever did what was pleasing to me. Behold his mercy: he went about doing good and curing all.

Behold his penitential works: he fasted for forty days and forty nights. Behold his modesty: it was such that the apostles were amazed that he spoke with the Samaritan woman.

Behold his goodness of heart: he wept at the grave of Lazarus; he consoled the widow of Naim. Behold his poverty: he had not whereon to lay his head.

Behold his zeal: how am I straitened till the work is accomplished which I have begun for the glory of my Father and the salvation of men! Behold his devotion: he passed the whole night in the prayer of God.

Behold his fatherly providence: lest he should send the people away fasting to their homes, he multiplied the loaves and fishes in the desert.

Behold his amiability: it was such that

all desired to see him. The multitude following him pressed upon one another. Zacheus, on account of the crowd, climbed up a tree in order to see him.

Behold his meekness: he absolves the adultress, he kisses the traitor Judas, he prays for his enemies. Behold his rightness of heart: I seek not my own glory but my Father's, who sent me.

Behold his stupendous liberality: take ye and eat my body, drink my blood. Behold his patience in trials: Father, thy will be done; as a lamb before its shearer he was dumb.

This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: this is the great High Priest, the exemplar and the model of priests. Conform to this model, my son, and my peace shall rest upon thee.

Be an imitator of my Christ and I shall be well pleased in thee. Always keep to this road, ever meditate upon this truth, ever live by this life.

O Jesus, the good Pastor, who wast seen on earth, who didst converse with men, grant, that ever meditating upon thy commandments, I may be imbued with thy most holy doctrine.

Grant that ever mindful of thy mercies I may be more and more inflamed with thy love. Grant that ever considering thy perfections I may become daily more conformable to thee.

O my soul! ever praise Jesus, ever love Jesus, ever adore Jesus, ever offer thyself to Jesus, ever long for Jesus, till thou shalt die in Jesus and reign forever with Jesus. Amen.

CHAPTER XV

THE PASSION OF OUR LORD

I MY son, the author and finisher of faith, despising shame, have borne the cross that thou mightst look upon me and, from the tree of life on which I have hung, ever draw into thy soul the sanctifying spirit.

Amen, I say to thee: if thou meditate with attention and devotion upon my passion thou shalt find therein in abundance all that is useful and necessary for thee.

Open therefore thy heart to me, and permit me, thy crucified Saviour, to enter therein, and soon thou shalt be wonderfully instructed.

Fix the eyes of thy heart upon my cross and soon thou shalt be drawn to it.

Rabboni, good Master, speak, for thy servant heareth.

Come to thy poor child and inflame his heart; enlighten his eyes that he may see.

My son, behold I come: incline thy ear; hear, man of good will: I have

loved thee and have offered myself up for thee.

Oh, if thou couldst comprehend this, thou wouldst indeed quickly reply: Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

Know therefore, my son! I have loved thee and have offered myself up for thee: me the Creator for thee the creature; me a Father for thee a prodigal son; me the God of heaven for thee a mere man;

Me the offended for thee the offender; me the benefactor for thee the ingrate; me the supreme good for thee most wretched.

Lord, why hast thou done so to me? I know that thy Father ever hears thee. If thou hadst but said the word, in an instant he would have healed my soul and forgiven the iniquity of my sins.

Why therefore hast thou sought me by so many labors? Why hast thou redeemed me by such a death?

My son, by this I have been glorified and by this has my Father been glorified in me.

See and understand what is the breadth, the length, the height and the depth of my supereminent charity towards thee.

I could indeed have freed thee by a word, by a movement of the lips; but, to manifest the intensity of my desire, I have willed to save thee by my works.

I have willed to lay down my life for thee; that thou mightst know that greater love than my love for thee there is none.

I have willed to bedew thee with my blood from the cross, that touched by my goodness thou wouldst be ashamed not to love such a Redeemer.

I have willed to stand before thee wounded for thine iniquities, that thou mightst understand how great is the sorrow that thy sins engender in the depths of my heart.

I have willed to carry about in my flesh the wounds of thy crimes, that moved by compassion thou mightst cease to add sins to sins and wounds to wounds.

Lastly, I have willed to suffer for thee, O priest, to leave thee an example that thou mightst follow in my footsteps.

Those whom my Father has foreseen to be conformable to the image of his Son, the same he has predestined.

Look therefore upon my face that henceforth its image may be imprinted upon thy soul and that thus thou mayst be saved.

Behold me in my agony praying the longer, and learn to persevere in prayer despite weariness or fatigue.

Behold me receiving that most bitter chalice from the hand of my Father, and learn to endure patiently and submissively labors, contradictions and all the hardships of thy sacred ministry.

Behold me abandoned in my agony by my sleeping apostles, and learn to conduct thyself manfully in adversities, even when bereft of consolation.

Behold me betrayed by Judas and learn to bear with false brethren.

Behold me embracing him and learn not to deny the kiss of peace to thine enemies.

Behold me bound and led into Jerusalem, and learn to suffer for my sake imprisonment and insult.

Behold me like a gentle lamb opening not my mouth nor resisting my captors, and learn to abstain from quarrels and disputes.

Come with me, my son, into Jerusalem; follow me: there also I will instruct thee.

The high priests, Annas and Caiphas, demand my death: fear, my son, lest, since thou art a priest, thou mayst by sinning offend me more than others and detract more from my glory.

I stand firmly in the face of my persecutors: fear not therefore those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

In the midst of the false witnesses that accuse me, I am silent; be not angry therefore with those who injure, reproach, calumniate or detract thee.

Notwithstanding all that I have suffered I take no rest, but watch the whole night in the company of those who mock and scourge me: do thou at least, my son, be moderate in giving repose to thy body.

Peter, at other times most generous and steadfast, thrice denies me in the hall

of the chief priest: the greater thou art, my son, the firmer thou thinkest thyself to stand, fear the more lest thou also fall in time of temptation.

Without delay I cast a merciful glance upon the penitent Peter; be thou patient and kind with those who have gone astray and have returned.

The weak-minded Pilate did not have the courage to free me, innocent though I was, but stricken with fear handed me over to the Jews: do not thou, my son, exercise the office of judge if thou canst not by thy firmness suppress iniquities.

Look not upon the countenance of the mighty and take care, lest through fear or sinful laxness in the tribunal of penance, thou throw me, the Holy of holies, to dogs.

Dressed as a fool in a white garment I am dismissed by Herod: do not scorn, my son, to be reputed as a fool for my sake and to be despised.

See Barabbas chosen before me, and love to be unknown and to be reputed of no account.

See me wounded for thy sake by the

most cruel stripes, and mortify thy members that thy spirit may be saved; weep and do penance for sinners.

See me cruelly and shamefully crowned with thorns; behold me a man with neither beauty nor comeliness, and do not thou, my son, adorn thy person with vain ornaments.

Scarcely able to bear up under wounds and blows, I refuse not to carry my cross for thee; do thou at least, my son, lovingly take upon thee my yoke which is sweet and light.

Come up with me to Calvary, my son: pay attention again and be instructed.

What means for thee that path moistened with my sweat and blood, if not that thou shouldst willingly in sweat and fatigue run through by-ways and hedges to seek out and save souls?

What means the weeping women, if not that thou shouldst devote thyself to meditation upon my passion, compassionate my sorrows and especially weep for thy sins which have been the cause of them?

What does the violent stripping of my garments teach thee, if not that thou shouldst patiently endure poverty?

What means the stretching out of my hands and the nailing of them to the cross, but that thou shouldst crucify thy flesh with its vices and concupiscences?

What means the elevation of my cross, but that through many tribulations it behooves thee to be raised to the kingdom of heaven?

What my drinking of gall and vinegar, if not that thou shouldst live soberly and not desire to feast sumptuously?

What means the thief saved at my right hand, but that thou oughtest never to despair of my mercy?

What the sinner perishing in the very presence of my benevolence, but that thou oughtest not to presume upon my clemency?

What does my prayer for my executioners teach thee, if not to pray for the most wicked sinners and to fully pardon my most bitter enemies?

What the commending of my Mother

to St. John, but that thou shouldst lovingly revere her and faithfully seek her intercession?

What my death for thee, but that thou also shouldst lay down thy life for thy brethren?

What do the sun, the moon, the rocks and the earth mourning over me say to thee, if not that thou art more callous than the stones themselves if thou art not affected by my death?

What do my enemies, striking their breasts, say to thee, but that my cross is the richest fountain of contrition and grace?

What my side opened by the soldier's lance, but that thou shouldst by love enter and dwell therein?

What Nicodemus taking me down from the cross, embalming me with sweet spices and placing me in a new sepulchre, but that thou shouldst receive and administer my sacraments with the greatest purity of heart and be solicitous for the glory of my house, of my altar?

Meditate, my son, upon these things,

be wholly in these things and my cross will become for thee salvation, life, protection from enemies and the infusion of heavenly sweetness.

CHAPTER XVI

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

I THE eternal Wisdom, who dwell on high, descending to earth, have willed to come into the world through Mary. Through her I have wrought the salvation of men: through her also, my son, I have decreed to give to thee wisdom and sanctity.

Thou art my son: I shall be a father to thee; Mary a mother. Thou art weak: I am the Lord thy refuge and strength; Mary is thine advocate that she may seek my assistance for thee.

Thou art a sinner: I am merciful and gracious; Mary is the refuge of sinners through whom thou canst obtain mercy.

Thou art striving for heaven: I am the God of heaven; and Mary is its Queen that she may obtain for thee admission into my kingdom.

Thou art a priest, and shouldst be holy: I am the supreme donor of all virtue and sanctity; Mary is the dispenser.

Dost thou wish, my son, to obtain grace and glory? Call upon Mary, pray

to Mary: through her I will hear thy prayers; I will show myself a son to her and she will show herself a mother to thee.

My Mother is the gate of heaven. Through her my gifts descend to earth and through her the saints ascend from earth to me.

How many sinners through her, my son, have I converted, how many converts have I perfected and sanctified; how many have received through her the gift of continence, victory over their passions and the crown of heavenly glory!

Witness saints Augustine, John Damascene, Germanus, Anselm, Bonaventure, Bernard, Dominic, Vincent Ferrer, Francis Xavier and so many other priestly servants of Mary so conspicuous for their sanctity.

Was it not through Mary that I sanctified them? Have they entered into my kingdom by any other gate than through Mary?

Number if thou canst those she has rescued from the danger of shipwreck, pestilence and heresy.

Such is the power that I, the Lord, have conferred upon my Mother: thus have I willed to honor her.

Do thou, my son, honor my Mother with a sincere heart; not alone from a desire of her protection but with the affection of true love.

She is thy Mother; hence thou owest her respect. She is my Mother, my temple, my sanctuary; hence thou owest her veneration.

She is full of grace; therefore thou owest her honor and praise. She is merciful; hence she has a right to thy confidence. She is the Queen and Mistress of saints; hence she has a right to thy service.

He pleases the Father who loves his Daughter; he pleases the Son who loves his Mother; he pleases the Holy Ghost who loves his Spouse. Be devout therefore to Mary and thou shalt please the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

O my son, Mary is my Mother. Yea, my beautiful one, my perfect one, my beloved.

I have willed, I have commanded that all nations should call her blessed, and devoutly honor her: for I who am mighty have done great things in her; I have willed, I have commanded, and as I have commanded so it has been done.

My Church has never ceased to praise her and to pay her homage. How frequent and how solemn are her festive days: how numerous the hymns sung in her honor.

Everywhere the preachers of the word exalt her: everywhere the people venerate her; all who are right of heart are devout to her. Thus I have willed, thus I have commanded.

Thou art a priest: accomplish my will; everywhere promote the honor of Mary my Mother: everywhere exalt her, everywhere praise her; foster devotion to her by every means in thy power.

Blessed is that priest who is a servant of Mary and brings clients to her! Blessed are the people that are devout to her. They shall receive from the Lord a blessing of the dew of heaven and the

fullness of earth, grace in this world and glory in the world to come. A servant of Mary never shall perish.

O Virgin thrice blessed! receive me as a servant, who once from the cross didst accept me as a son. Show thyself a mother to me by making me most devout to thee.

O Virgin most powerful, who hast crushed the serpent, help me to overcome my passions, free me from the bondage of my vices.

O Virgin, at whose behest the treasures of heaven are dispensed, obtain for me those graces that thou knowest to be necessary for me; obtain for me a lively faith, a firm hope, an ardent charity and the gift of prayer; ask for me chastity, humility, contempt of the world and zeal for souls!

O Virgin help of Christians! aid me in every difficulty, free me from every danger now and at the hour of my death. Daily shall I praise thee and pray to thee for those graces; and through thee I shall scatter my enemies as with a horn

and spurn those that rise up against me.

O Mary, may all peoples serve and honor thee, and every nation bend the knee before thee!

Grant to me, O Lord, that I may be able to promote everywhere thy holy religion and overcome thine enemies. Amen.

CHAPTER XVII

ARDOR

MY Father makes his ministers a burning fire; and if thou wishest to serve me worthily in the sacred ministry, thou must be fervent in spirit.

Follow me, my son. It was ever my joy to do the will of my Father who sent me. The desire to do that will was ever in my heart like a consuming fire and I have cried out: How am I straitened until it be accomplished.

Let a like ardor prevail in thee, dearly beloved: be wholly on fire for heavenly things.

As the soldier longs for victory, as the merchant covets gain, so do thou desire and long for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Whatever things conduce to this end diligently perform, not as forced by necessity but as urged on by charity.

I have sought the glory of my Father. I, who am in need of nothing, have gone out from the Father and have come into the world to seek and save that which

was lost. Mark well: I have sought; I have gone out, I have come. To wait for labor is the mark of the lukewarm, to seek it that of the fervent.

A true fisherman does not take his rest while fishes offer themselves to be caught, but casts out the hook and the net to capture them.

If, therefore, thou wishest to be a priest according to my heart, it behooves thee to be ever solicitous for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, to desire nothing more than these two things, to seek energetically for occasions that may conduce to them and plan the means of procuring them.

It behooves thee in season and out of season to labor, to strive, and to spend thyself, that by prayer, the Holy Sacrifice and the preaching of the word of God, by thy ministry in the holy tribunal and the dispensing of the sacraments, by good example and exhortation, by advice and encouragement, by kindness and correction, thou mayst in every way possible extend the kingdom of God and multiply the servants of the Lord.

Thus did my saints, especially my apostles, who travelled through the whole world, striving to subdue all nations to me and to compel all men to believe, to be baptized, to live rightly and to be sanctified.

Blessed are those servants who have had nothing else in view but that through their ministry every knee should bend at the name of Jesus and every tongue should confess his divinity.

Blessed are those servants who, wholly intent upon the word and prayer, have esteemed all things else as dross, so long as they obtained the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

But you indolent servants, useless servants, blush and be confounded. Far from being zealous you flee from labor.

You love a bountiful recompense but not the labors of the ministry, a well-furnished table but not the altar, reading but not the tribunal of penance, conversation but not prayer, walking but not study, amusement but not the care of the flock.

You are ever ready to take part in

worldly affairs, but every spiritual duty finds you lukewarm and indolent.

I excavate the walls of your hearts and I find written thereon: Oh, that I did not have to pray! Oh, that I did not have to teach catechism! Oh, that I did not have to preach! Oh, that nobody would come to confession!

Wretched men! How can you call yourselves priests? How can you call yourselves the ministers of God? You do not build up but destroy: You do not heal but kill: You do not save but ruin my sheep.

O Lord, from whom and through whom are all things, who hast chosen me for thy priest, permit not, I implore thee, that I become the despoiler of thy glory and the ruination of souls, but rather that I be unto them resurrection and sanctification.

Confirm, I pray thee, what thou hast wrought in me: make me thy worthy minister: help me to serve thee with the greatest zeal in the most holy functions of the priesthood.

Humbly I beseech thee, O Lord, grant me the glowing gold of holy ardor, that I may be able to serve thee with fervor.

O Heart of Jesus, furnace of divine love, cast into my heart at least one spark of that fire that glows in thee: revive in me the spirit of zeal, imprint upon me thy charity that I may worthily perform thy work!

O love, that ever burns and is never extinguished, inflame me.

CHAPTER XVIII

LUKEWARMNESS

WOE to thee, my son, if thou grow-est lukewarm in my service! Woe to thee! for I shall begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.

Oh, if thou couldst understand how serious a matter it is to grieve me, to move me to loathing and finally to be cast from me as something accursed, verily thou wouldst fear nothing more than to grow lukewarm and to fall little by little through negligence from thy first fervor.

Oh, how foolish are they who thus by their own fault forfeit the exuberance of grace and, gradually falling away, become at last abominable in my sight.

Wretched men! They think them-selves rich and in want of nothing; and they know not that they are miserable, poor, blind and naked.

Alas, my son, there are many such among my priests. How many are there

who, while they occupy an office of perfection, give little thought to acquiring perfection.

They indulge their appetites; they conform to the manners of the world; they love entertainments and attend them without restraint: they strive to gather up money and love to laugh and make merry in the company of women.

They pass their time in inane conversation, yea, even in detraction; they are remarkable for their vanity in language and deportment; they devote scarcely any time to reading and meditating upon sacred subjects.

They are worldly, affected, earthly, unrestrained, puffed up with vain and useless knowledge, scheming for positions of influence: and nevertheless they fear nothing for themselves; nor do they enter into themselves that they may realize their wretchedness and poverty.

They are satisfied if they do not omit their office, if they administer the sacraments when asked to do so, if they celebrate Masses of obligation punctually, if they give no public scandal and if they

feel that their conscience is not burdened with mortal sin.

They will tell you forsooth that they are not bound to practise higher perfection. To emulate such a perfect state outside of the cloister they call hypocrisy. The right conscience of others more timorous than their own they stigmatize as scrupulous.

Thus they pass the whole span of their lives in ordinary vices! they do not aim at purity of heart; they perform the holy functions of their ministry in a languid and perfunctory manner without any interior spirit, without any zeal.

Oh, dangerous state and all the more dangerous in that its danger is not perceived!

If thou livest thus tremble, my son. Thou hast been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Fear the anger of God, for cursed is he that does the work of the Lord carelessly.

Hasten therefore to stir up the grace that was given thee by the imposition of hands.

Cry out to the fountain of charity, to

Jesus whose property it is to have mercy. Call upon him and say: I have wandered as a sheep that had gone astray: save thy servant, O Lord.

Save me, O God, for the waters have entered in even unto my soul. Raise me up from the mire lest I stick fast therein, lest the deep swallow me up and the mouth of the pit reach out to engulf me.

O God, who killeth and bringeth back to life, have mercy on me, raise me up. Thunder thy judgments in my ears, strike with trembling all my bones that at least at the voice of thy terrible trumpet I may awaken from my deep sleep.

CHAPTER XIX

A PURE INTENTION

THOU knowest, dearly beloved, that I said to thee of old: The light of thy body is thine eye; if thine eye is simple, thy whole body will be lightsome.

Dost thou comprehend this, my son? Thine eye is thine intention: thy body is the series of thy daily actions, the functions of thy ministry.

Dost thou wish therefore that thine actions be worthy of a true priest? Dost thou wish that thy ministry be pleasing to me? Have in view a holy purpose, a right intention.

I, thy Saviour, have sought solely the glory of my Father and the salvation of souls. Do thou in like manner: be intent upon this one thing, have this one object before thine eyes.

For this purpose enter into the sanctuary; for this purpose ascend the altar;

for this purpose celebrate holy Mass; for this purpose pray, teach, evangelize, labor.

They who do not run or labor for this end, run and labor absolutely in vain.

How many are there among my priests, my son, who perform their works and justices only for earthly ends, seeking either temporal gain or vainglory in all things!

They celebrate but for the sake of the stipendium, they give missions but for pay, they teach but that they may be called learned, they feed the flock but that they may gather the wool.

Their whole body is darksome, they receive now what they desire, an earthly reward.

Verily, I shall say to them at the last day: Remember that you have received good things in your lifetime: you have already received your reward, nothing more remains for you than to be placed among the useless servants.

You have gathered, but not for me: wherefore you have scattered.

But thou wilt say, my son: I have not

had such things in view. Thou knowest, O Lord, that for thy sake I have entered the sanctuary and have received the imposition of hands.

Very good, my son. But I say to thee: Many begin thus, but few persevere.

The old serpent is very shrewd and those whom he perceives to be of right heart he influences by every manner of deceit in order to corrupt little by little their good intention and turn it to evil.

When he has accomplished this, he blinds them that they may not see that they have been deceived by Satan and that they have deviated from their holy purpose.

Mark how this is accomplished. Far be it from me, says the priest, that I should celebrate Mass on account of the stipendium. But when the devil sees that there is no stipendium, he comes and instils a spirit of weariness and ennui; and brings it about that the priest, who never allowed business affairs no matter how urgent to deter him from celebrating daily, neglects to do so now

for a trifling cause when there is no stipendium forthcoming. Seest thou, my son, how he has been entrapped? He now seeks self more than the glory of God.

Far be it from me, says the priest, that I should seek anything else from the preaching of the word of God than that for which I have been sent. But the devil comes and moves the wise of this world to praise the preacher. He is pleased and swells up with pride: he is now ashamed to preach simply to the poor: he now teaches in the persuasive words of human wisdom that he may please the learned and make himself agreeable to them; he is already entrapped. He now seeks self more than the salvation of souls: he has already turned aside from his holy purpose.

Oh, how many wretched ones in a thousand other ways does the angel of darkness thus deceive and entrap! That prince of wickedness never sleeps, he is very shrewd and ever goes about seeking to quietly insinuate and associate himself with the holiest actions.

Watch therefore, dearly beloved, that thou enterest not into his temptations.

Aim at and seek nothing else than God's good pleasure and the welfare of your neighbor; thus thou shalt enjoy interior liberty.

Be zealous for the glory of the heavenly Father as becomes a good son: be ever alive to his interests as becomes a faithful servant. Remember that he who seeks self more in the ministry is a thief and like Lucifer appropriates to himself the glory due to God.

Fight manfully, my son, against the old serpent, that he may never cause thee to deviate from a right intention. Look up to God in the morning and offer to his glory all the thoughts, words and actions of the day; renounce expressly every perverse motive that might possibly insinuate itself.

This shall be for thee a most powerful shield against all the deceits of the enemy.

And if he shall then come, and through the temptation of vanity strive to appropriate thine actions to himself,

thou canst reply: Thou comest far too late, I have already offered all to the glory of God, everything is in his possession, nothing remains for thee.

Fight manfully during the day, offering up as far as possible each action to God.

Say to him: O Lord, I wish to perform this action to please thee and to promote thy glory, to conform to thy good pleasure; therefore I wish to perform it as perfectly as possible.

Be on thy guard during the action: and if thou perceivest the serpent of vanity or cupidity craftily approaching, crush its head.

Say to it: I have not, evil spirit, begun the action for thy sake, nor will I continue it for thee.

It was begun for the greater glory of God; for the greater glory of God shall I complete it. Depart from me most wicked seducer.

After the action, examine thyself; and if thou findest that thou hast been wounded by the serpent, immediately cure the wound of pride by the remedy

of humility. Rise and begin again with new vigor.

Lastly, perform all thy works under my eye as if thou sawest me present; frequently call upon my aid. I, my son, will come and strengthen thee.

Fight thus, my son, and soon thine eye shall be simple and thy whole body lightsome.

CHAPTER XX

THE PRACTICE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL VIRTUES

I HAVE sought not leaves but fruit on my fig tree and not finding any I cursed that fig tree and it withered away.

This was done and written, my son for thine instruction, that thou mayst know that I demand of thee not the appearance of virtue but the very essence and reality.

Will a whitened wall please me if beneath it I find but dead men's bones?

O my son; do not purify only the outside of the chalice. It does not suffice for thee to enlarge the hem of thy garment.

Know that I am a spirit, and that those who adore me should adore in spirit and in truth. Men see but the countenance but I search the heart.

Hear, my son: thou must be humble But downcast eyes, plain clothes and a modest bearing are not sufficient. If thou refusest to suffer the contempt that

these engender, thy humility is vain, it is changed into pride.

Thou must be patient. But it is not enough to be a lamb in the pasture; thou shouldst be one also in the shambles. If thou refusest to bear tribulation, thy patience is vain, it is changed into impatience.

Thou must be obedient. But it is not sufficient to submit to kind masters and refuse obedience to the froward, or to comply in some things and resist in others. If thou wilt not bear contradiction, thine obedience is vain, it is changed into rebellion.

Thou must do penance for thy sins. But it does not suffice to bow the head and confess them. Thou shouldst grieve in thy heart, be contrite in spirit, abandon thy vices and chastise thy body. Without amendment thy penance is vain; without pain there is no mortification.

In a word, thou must abound in virtues. But it will avail thee little to possess the appearance of virtue if thou laborest not to acquire the reality. No one can be a victor without a struggle,

nor cultivate virtue without doing violence to himself.

And thou, my son, who art reputed to be religious, dost thou not daily fall? Does not perhaps the lightest breath easily overturn and cast down thine empty virtue?

Does not thy humility, thy purity, thy patience, thy charity often fail thee in the face of the slightest temptations?

Is it not true that thou honorest me with thy lips, when thy heart is far from me? Be on thy guard: see that thy works are perfect in my sight.

O Lord, renew a right spirit within my bowels; strengthen me with thy perfect spirit, that my heart may be firmly fixed in solid virtue, and in true sanctity I may erect the edifice of my salvation; lest, when I shall appear before thee as my Judge, thou shalt say to me:

Not every one who says to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into my kingdom: Amen, I say to thee I know thee not. depart from me forever.

CHAPTER XXI

HUMILITY

THOU art placed over others, my son; beware not to turn the graces of thine ordination into an argument for ambition.

Pride is detestable in the sight of God, of angels and of men. Yet it easily finds an entrance into the souls of those who have been raised up by my Father to an exalted position, if they are not on their guard against it.

Witness how it conquered Lucifer, the prince of angels, and cast him down from the highest heavens to the depths of hell.

See how it tempted my apostles in the very presence of my humility.

They contended among themselves as to who was the greater, and two of them were ambitious to sit one on my right and the other on my left hand in the kingdom of my Father.

Wherefore, my son, think not thyself free from the temptation of pride. The

greater thou art humble thyself the more, not minding high things but consenting to the humble.

Amen, amen, I say to thee: unless thou become as a little child, thou shalt not enter into my kingdom.

Be humble, my son. In my religion and discipline this is the first, second and third essential.

Yea more, the whole and true rule of Christian wisdom consists in genuine and voluntary humility.

It is the foundation of faith, bringing every intellect into subjection.

It is the root of all the other virtues, as pride is the source of all sin.

It is the mother, the nurse, the support and the anchor of true piety and devotion.

And thou, my son, if thou acquirest virtues without it, thou carriest sand in the wind.

All thy good works shall amount to nothing, if they be not secured by humility.

Without it the austerity of thy life is mere hypocrisy, lofty contemplation, an

illusion and, even poverty itself, empty vanity.

Verily, the sinner who humbles himself is more pleasing to me than thou, remarkable as thou mayst be for many virtues, if thou art lacking in humility. He shall go down to his house justified by me.

Thou knowest, my son, that thou shalt be perfect if thou art like to me thy Master. Be humble and thou shalt be like to me; for I am meek and humble of heart.

Thou knowest that though I was the Son of God, I emptied myself taking the form of a servant and in shape formed as a man.

Yea more, in my passion I was as a worm and not a man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.

See how easy it is to imitate me in regard to this virtue.

If I had commanded everyone as I could have done, if I had laid claim to the honors of the world as was my right, if in all things I willed to be first and foremost as was but just:

Then, my son, thou couldst with justice have said: How shall I follow my Saviour?

To rule, to command, to govern, to excel in strength and virtue is not in my power; I shall always find rivals who will prevent me.

One it is who receives the prize. How can I run so fast as to arrive first and lay hold of it?

But, my son, if thou desirest as thou shouldst to follow in the path of humility me who have gone before thee, the matter is perfectly plain and simple.

Choose the lowest place. No one will envy thee or take it from thee. Yea rather all will help thee to descend; for all love to be exalted and to see others beneath them.

Verily, the lowest place in this world is for that very reason the highest in humility.

It is therefore all the more easy for thee to attain to the summit of humility as it is difficult for others to obtain the crown of earthly glory.

The more thou humblest thyself the

more shalt thou please me and the more shalt thou please men.

Take upon thee, my son, the yoke of humility and thou shalt find a most sweet repose for thy soul.

Yea, my peace shall be given to thee, which surpasseth all understanding.

My love also thou shalt possess; for never was there found an humble heart that was not loving also, nor a soul abhorring vanity that did not draw near and become united to me.

Taste and see how delightful I am to the humble. I love and console them. I stoop down to them and pour out abundantly my graces upon them. I reveal to them my secrets and sweetly draw them to myself.

But beware, my son, not to mistake the shadow of humility for humility itself.

Think not thyself humble because thou hast learned that thou art as nothing in my sight, unless thou art willing to be reputed as nothing.

It is indeed a good and excellent thing to recognize thy nothingness. This knowledge is the way to humility, the

remote preparation of the soul; but it is not humility itself.

Strive therefore to be humble not in thine intelligence alone, but in thine innermost heart; truly wishing to be little esteemed, and even like me to suffer indignities.

This indeed entails labor and only the violent accomplish it; for it is not easy for a man to overcome self-love.

But have confidence, my son. Remember that thou canst do all things in him that strengtheneth thee.

Courage, my dearly beloved; be assured that thou canst attain to that humility that my saints possessed if thou willest to use the same means.

Wherefore, like them frequently consider the reasons thou hast for humbling thyself, viz.: thy sins, thy defects, thine infirmities, thine inclination to evil and tardiness in accomplishing good; and do thou like them, train thyself often in the various exercises of humility.

Humble thyself, knowing that the more a priest is humbled in spirit, the more is he exalted in his ministry.

And the more lowly and weak he recognizes himself to be in my sight, the more I am delighted to confound even the mighty through his humility.

Be humble like St. John the Baptist, and I will make thy mouth like a sharp sword, and thou shalt prepare for me a perfect people.

Be humble like St. Peter, and thou shalt be a fisher of men.

Be humble, and thou shalt perform wonderful things in thy lifetime; thou shalt be secure in the hour of death and thou shalt obtain the eternal crown of glory.

CHAPTER XXII

SELF-HUMILIATION

I KNOW, O Lord, and I confess to thee that if I should wish to be proud and to glory in myself thou wouldst stand against me.

I know also that, if I should humiliate myself, thy grace would be close to me and thy light a neighbor to my heart.

Grant therefore that I may know my nothingness, and not to myself but to thee give glory.

Grant that I may realize my miseries and in the spirit of humility cry out: My God, I blush and am ashamed to raise my eyes towards thee. Look down with mercy upon me, for I am poor and needy.

O Lord! what is man that thou art mindful of him? I am a man, a wretched man, born of woman, living for a short time, filled with many miseries.

I am a man who like the grass to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; like the flower that blooms and withers

away; like a cloud appearing for a moment and then vanishing.

I am a man surrounded by infirmity, involved in ignorance and darkness, prone to evil, slow and weak in the performance of good; inconstant as the leaf that is carried by the wind; full of imperfections; ever so harrassed by evil passions that, ever warring against them and groaning under the burden, I am constrained to cry out: Why, O Lord, hast thou set me against thee and made me a burden to myself?

Behold what manner of man I am, O Lord, behold what is my inheritance! How then canst thou be induced to look upon such a one?

But, O Lord, this it is that still more casts me down and humbles me in thy sight: I was conceived in iniquity and in sins did my mother conceive me.

Thou lookest upon man in his innocence, but I before I was born lost innocence. Nevertheless thou hast had mercy on me, thou hast not hidden thy face from me, thou hast stretched out thy hand to me. I was cast upon thee from

the womb, and from the breasts of my mother thou didst not refuse to be my God. Then it was that I was made pleasing and delightful to thee.

Oh, if I had but preserved my baptismal innocence! But alas! Scarcely was I able to think when I thought evil things; scarcely was I able to desire when I desired forbidden things; scarcely was I able to act when I committed sin.

Hence my iniquities are multiplied beyond the hairs of my head. Where, O Lord, shall I hide myself from the face of thine anger?

Every creature faithfully observes thy law. The sun gives light, the stars shine, the earth produces, the waters flow, the plants grow, the ox knows his master as thou hast commanded; but I have not known thee, I have gone aside from thy commandments, I have sinned and done evil before thee. Humbled and ashamed I have cast myself at thy feet, O Father of mercies, begging pardon and forgiveness.

Perhaps I have been sprinkled with thy hyssop and made clean. Nevertheless I cannot say: I know and am certain; for I know not whether I am worthy of love or hate. In such doubt and anxiety how can I be proud and glory in myself?

O Lord, wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin!

In thee indeed do I trust, O God, who didst hear the prayer of the woman of Chanaan, who didst convert the publican, who didst absolve the adultress, who didst look with mercy upon Peter and spared the thief on the cross.

In thee have I hoped, and rejoicing in my assurance, I am confident that thou hast had mercy on me and hast wiped away my iniquities as a cloud.

Even if this were so, what cause have I to glory? Is forgiveness not from thee alone and not from myself? Not I but thou hast made me clean: and however purified I may be, is it not ever true, that I was an impure and wretched sinner?

Is it not ever certain that I would fall

back into the same sins and even worse crimes, unless I were prevented by thy grace?

Grant, O Lord, that I may more and more realize my humiliation that is within me, and meditating upon my years in the bitterness of my soul, and fearing for my great weakness, I may remain ever humbled in thy sight.

Far be it from me to glory in myself, unless it be in mine infirmities, that thy power may dwell in me.

CHAPTER XXIII

MORTIFICATION

AMEN, amen, I say to thee, my son, he that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto everlasting life. Why this? Hear and understand.

This life of which I speak to thee is not thy soul, but thy temporal life, thy living flesh.

Verily, my son, if thou lovest this, thou shalt lose it: if thou hatest this, thou shalt save it.

For if thou lovest this life thou shalt live according to it; but if thou livest according to it thou shalt die.

If, on the contrary, thou hatest it, thou wilt mortify by the spirit its deeds; and if by the spirit thou mortifiest the deeds of the flesh thou shalt live.

Thou knowest, my son, that the desires of the flesh are altogether opposed to my law and commandments. Thou knowest that thy nature inclines thee to pride, avarice, lust, envy, intemperance and sloth, whilst I demand of thee

humility, justice, contempt of riches, charity, chastity, sobriety and labor.

Thou knowest that thy flesh desires worldly comforts, whilst I prescribe for thee abnegation and penance.

Loving therefore thy flesh, thou shalt fulfill its desires, thou shalt do the evil that is forbidden, and neglect to do the good that is commanded; and thus thou shalt lose both body and soul.

Take therefore, my son, the sword of the spirit and fight against this most deadly enemy.

Nail it to the cross, fasten it there together with Christ; for they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences.

Give to thy servant, says the Holy Spirit, bread, discipline and work. Mortify thus, my son, thy members that thy soul may be saved.

Give it bread. If thy flesh hungereth give it food; if it thirsteth give it drink, but only what is necessary.

Give it discipline. Keep strict control upon thy lips, thine ears, thine eyes and all the other senses of the body.

Give it work, and that indeed at all times; so that whenever the devil desires to excite thy flesh to evil, he shall find it occupied.

Verily, my son, if thou puttest away idleness from thee, thou shalt keep thyself free from many evils.

Thus bring thy flesh into subjection, lest when thou hast preached to others and saved many, thou thyself shouldst become a castaway.

This, my son, it is true, is not the work of one day nor child's play.

With men this is impossible, but with me all things are possible.

Raise thy hands to thy God who is in heaven; let thy prayers ascend as incense in my sight.

Say with an ardent longing: O Lord, I know that thy will is my sanctification.

Grant me, therefore, this grace that thou hast shown to be so necessary for me, that I may mortify my flesh which would otherwise lead me to sin and perdition.

Courage, dearly beloved! Do not all, who strive for the mastery, refrain them-

selves from all things? They that they may receive a corruptible crown, but thou an incorruptible one.

Lastly, my son, that thou mayst the more easily put into practice the precious instructions that I have given thee, often look upon me, thy Saviour.

See me born in a manger, sleeping upon the hard board, after eight days patiently submitting to the knife of circumcision and later fleeing from mine enemies into Egypt.

See me fasting for forty days in the desert, bound with chains during my passion, smitten with reeds, crowned with thorns, wounded and sinking under the weight my cross.

Behold me nailed to the cross, drinking gall and vinegar, and at last with a loud cry, yielding up my spirit. See how I have mortified my flesh.

O my son! if I have not spared my own flesh, but have willed to thus mortify it for thy salvation; if I have borne in it so lovingly the penalty of thy sins, thou at least shouldst fill up in thy flesh those things that are wanting in my sufferings.

If thou hast not the courage to punish thyself, at least be patient when I mercifully chastise thee.

Endure patiently sickness and sorrow, inconveniences and the loss of temporal goods.

Bear up manfully under calumnies, reproaches and persecutions; persevere in the labors of thy sacred ministry.

If thou canst not so hate thy flesh as to perfectly bury it with me in death, at least so mortify it that thou mayst keep it ever absolutely subject to my law, to my commandments, to my will, to reason, to religion and the obligations of thy ministry.

Courage, my son, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away.

CHAPTER XXIV

PURITY OF CONSCIENCE

O LORD, who wast begotten before the morning star in the bosom of the Eternal Father; O Lord, whom the heavens cannot contain; O Lord, who art so holy that the Church wonders that thou hast not abhorred the immaculate womb of a virgin; O Lord, the latchet of whose shoe St. John was unworthy to loose:

Thou hast chosen me to dispense thy mysteries, to daily serve at thine altar with mine own hands; that thou mayst daily come to me and make thine abode with me, that I may receive and eat thy body and distribute it to others.

Oh, vile that I am, and most unworthy! Whither shall I go from thy spirit? and whither shall I flee from thy face?

Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord. There is no concord between thee and Belial; there is no agreement with idols in thy temple; there is no communion between thy light and my darkness.

How can my mouth be pure enough, how can my hands be clean enough, how can my heart be immaculate enough for such a divine service!

My son, thou shouldst not be so quickly troubled and dejected at the consideration of my dignity.

I indeed am thrice holy; thou but dust. But I know thy nothingness: I know that in thee I have as minister not an angel but a man.

I do not exact of thee perfect immunity from sin, but that thou exercise the greatest care to acquire it. Do faithfully what lies in thy power; if then anything should be wanting, say but the word and I will supply the rest.

Woe to thee, my son, if thou dost not what is in thee, if thou approachest to my service and offerest sacrifice to me with mortal sin upon thy soul! So doing, thou defilest my holy name, despisest my table, and eateth and drinketh judgment to thyself.

Amen, I say to thee, strive diligently to keep thy conscience unsullied. Take

care that ever innocent of hands and clean of heart thou approachest to receive the blessing and mercy of my sanctuary.

Let thy soul be ever in my hands, lest it be polluted by evil thoughts and desires, lest it be defiled by wicked words, lest it be corrupted by vicious actions.

Judge thyself and thou shalt not be judged; and if thou perceivest that the gold of thy soul has been tarnished by any stain, if its excellent color has been changed by the withdrawal of my grace, let not the sun go down upon thy sin: go quickly to the pool of Siloe that thou mayst be purified in the blood of the Lamb.

Go show thyself to a priest; and humbly offer the gift that I never despise, the gift of tears and a contrite heart: thus when thou shalt fall thou shalt not lie prostrate, for my hand shall raise thee up.

Hold, O Lord, hold my right hand and lead me according to thy will that I may not fall.

I indeed have said in my self-assurance, I shall not be moved forever: I have sworn and am determined to keep the judgments of thy justice. Nevertheless if thou turnest thy face from me, I shall suddenly become troubled, shall fall into sin and become wholly defiled.

Look, Lord, upon my weakness; hasten to mine aid. Be ever at my right hand that I may not become as a lost vessel, but may ever approach thine altar in innocence of heart.

CHAPTER XXV

FREQUENT CONFESSION

IT behooves thee, my son, who carriest the sacred vessels, eatest the bread of angels, and distributest it to others, to be frequently purified from thy sins and to be washed more and more from thine iniquity.

Thy senses and the affections of thy heart are ever prone to evil; and unless thou hast frequent recourse to the fountain of grace and mercy, thou shalt scarcely be able to keep thyself unspotted in my service, to offer sacrifice to me without blame and worthily perform the other functions of thy sacred ministry.

Thou knowest, my son, thou teachest thy people that frequent confession washes away iniquity more and more, averts sin, preserves from evil, strengthens in good, fosters vigilance, keeps one in the right path, strengthens one against temptation, infuses holy peace into the soul, increases fervor and renders men daily purer and more perfect.

Thou knowest, my son, thou teachest that he who neglects confession, falls little by little, perceives less clearly his faults, and becomes gradually accustomed to sin.

From day to day he grows weaker in the battle against the enemies of his soul, more easily falls into the traps of the devil, rises again with greater difficulty, and the longer he puts off confession the more unwilling he is to confess.

What thou teachest, my son, first practice thyself. Go frequently to confession knowing that thou hast greater need of it than others since thou shouldst be more circumspect and more holy than they.

Thou art the special object of the devil's attacks, since thou must be ready at every instant to perform holy functions in a holy manner.

If thou enterest upon this work without proving thyself, without the necessary purity of heart, thou shalt fall into that fatal lethargy and blindness of mind so much to be feared.

For this reason there are many infirm

and weak, and many sleep who, if they had frequently judged themselves in holy confession, would not have been afflicted by me, their Judge, with this obduracy of heart.

No doubt, my son, thou hast often seen those who, in the beginning of their priestly life, were holy and the object of universal praise, who later on became so wicked that they scarcely possessed a shadow of their former virtue.

Why this? perhaps thou hast asked. Why? From neglect of confession.

Their enemy, the devil, seeing how great is the fruit of frequent confession, strives by every possible means to withdraw them from this holy exercise. What is the use, says he, of going to confession every week or two? Thou art only burdening and annoying the confessor, and needlessly tormenting thyself.

Thou seest that thou art living well; thy daily faults are but trifles; it will be time enough to go to confession when thou hast a grievous sin to confess.

Thus he first deceives them; and what happens then? They now confide too much in their own virtue; they are deprived of the graces that proceed from holy absolution; hence they easily fall into sin.

After the first fall, it is true, they arise and with sorrow hasten to their confessor and are absolved.

In a little while they are again tempted, again they fall. What does Satan do now? He inspires them with distaste for confession.

Wait awhile, he says, you have plenty of time; it is true that you cannot say Mass without previous confession but you are not obliged to say Mass to-morrow.

Thus they put off their confession. In the meantime obstacles arise and now they must of necessity say Mass. The congregation is assembled and there is no time for them to show themselves to a priest.

They humble themselves, it is true, they make an act of contrition after a

manner, but imperfectly. Imperfect contrition without confession does not wash away sin.

Their guilt therefore remains. Nevertheless they say Mass; then follows a sacrilegious communion, and through this they are confirmed in evil.

When the Mass is over they give no further thought to going to confession.

Before the next Mass they experience indeed qualms of conscience; but before the third, all anxiety has passed.

Afterwards they become quite at ease in their sin, nor do they any longer fear to associate an infamous life with the highest ministry.

After a long time perhaps the old rule will recall them to confession. But what do they do?

They leave their former confessor and seek out a more indulgent one, who says peace when there is no peace, places a pillow under their heads and thus suffers those wretched priests to live on in their sins without any amendment of life.

Behold how they fall who neglect confession.

Beware, my son, lest a like thing happen to thee. When therefore the time arrives when the rule of a holy life directs that thou shouldst go to confession, do not put it off from day to day.

Do not say: I am not in need of confession. He who says that he has no sin deceives himself and the truth is not in him.

Know therefore that thou art not more holy than my saints, nor more perfect than the most perfect men.

Read their lives, my son, and thou wilt see that they frequently had recourse to confession. It is a characteristic of the just ever to fear, and the more worthy they are of love, the more they fear lest they may be deserving of hate.

If the just man scarcely hopes for salvation, how canst thou feel secure without frequent confession?

Verily, my son, if thou art a good pastor, thou wilt be solicitous that thy flock neglect not the salutary practice of confession; and if they are indifferent thou urgest them on, reprovest and threatenest.

But if thou thyself neglect confession, who will trouble himself about it, who will admonish thee? Verily, no one.

If thy flock fall into evil habits, thou rebukest them; but who will reform thee if not thy confessor?

If thou showest thyself not to that priest, no other will admonish thee, no other will reprehend thee. True friends will scarcely dare to do it, and false ones will not.

Seest thou how great are the dangers that threaten thee if thou neglectest confession?

CHAPTER XXVI

VENIAL SIN

MY son, contemn not small things lest thou fall by little and little. Thou dreadest the more grievous sins; but perhaps thou dost not sufficiently fear the little vices.

Thou errest, my son: a little fire is indeed little, but if not watched it may envelop in flames even a great forest. A slight illness is a trifling thing, it is true, but if neglected it soon grows worse and causes death.

Do buildings fall to the ground all at once? No, my son: there is first a little crack, it is neglected, the water enters, it freezes and forces the stones apart, one by one the walls collapse; thus at last the house is destroyed.

See how dangerous it may be to despise little things. If that part of the wall which first fell had been immediately repaired, the house would still be standing. But because slight defects were overlooked, the house is destroyed.

Hence a certain wise man has said: I have to declare a wonderful and un-

heard of thing: sometimes it seems to me that mortal sins are not to be avoided with as much zeal as venial ones.

The very nature of sin causes us to abhor the former; but because the latter are trifling, we are indolent and neglectful of them, and our soul does not rise up nobly to expel them. If a ship springs a leak, it is easy in the beginning to check the flow and bale out the water. But if neglected the hold of the ship will soon be filled.

What difference does it make whether the ship goes down by being engulfed in one big wave or is little by little filled with water and then sinks?

Therefore avoid venial faults; often examine your conscience to see if you have committed any; go frequently to confession in order to have them washed away lest, increasing in number, they may dispose to mortal sin.

But, sayest thou, they are only venial sins; they do not make me an enemy to God; I am not bound to avoid them under pain of eternal death.

Very true, my son: nor am I bound to bestow upon thee any useful graces and

efficacious helps, nor to guard and protect thee in a special manner.

If, therefore, thou art so indifferent to my friendship that thou dreadest only my hatred, fear lest I withhold from thee these more abundant graces and efficacious helps.

Thus thou shalt easily fall into a dangerous worldly manner of life; thus living in the midst of bitter enemies, deprived of the special shield of my protection, thou wilt easily become wounded. How canst thou hope that I will be solicitous about thee when thou carest so little about me?

O Lord, how often have I said: Peace, peace, and there was no peace; perhaps I even say so yet, and there is none. How many venial sins have I not committed and do I not still commit with full knowledge and deliberate consent!

How can I say therefore that I love thee? Does he love thee fervently who thus so frequently grieves thee or at least does not fear to grieve thee?

Grant, O Lord, that I may love thee so dearly that I may carefully avoid even the appearance of evil.

CHAPTER XXVII

CONTRITION FOR VENIAL SIN

LET him, my son, who wishes to possess spiritual vigor, grieve for his venial sins. Many confess them, but few are purified from them; because there is lacking the sorrow of true contrition and the purpose of true amendment.

They go to confession from mere habit; they would indeed like to amend their lives, but they do not truly will to do so; they make no effort to banish these sins from their hearts.

If thou truly desirest to be purified, have a real detestation of thy venial sins. Weigh them not with the balance of men which is false, but in the scales of my sanctuary.

Thou wilt see how grave they are even though they be but venial: thou wilt see that they displease me, that they offend me, that they lessen my friendship, grieve the Holy Spirit, dampen the ardor of charity, destroy the warmth and promptitude of devotion, retard progress in the way of salvation, beget lukewarm-

ness and place obstacles to the reception of grace.

Oh, if thou didst but permit these truths to sink into thy heart, how bitterly wouldst thou deplore thy venial sins! Oh, if thou couldst but see the tears that my saints have shed for like faults, verily thou wouldst be moved to contrition for them.

Make a firm resolution prompted not by a vague wish but by a sincere act of the will. Attend particularly to those faults which thou committest more frequently. Say: I will commit them no more; if the enemy comes I will act manfully, I will fight and I will conquer. Thus thou shalt become purified, and being purified thou shalt make progress.

Armed with these two shields, viz., a horror of sin and a firm purpose of amendment, thou wilt be ever on thy guard. Whenever the enemy appears, thou wilt resist him and wilt not suffer him, at least knowingly and with full consent of thy will, to break into thy house.

Nevertheless, my son, do not hope to keep thyself altogether free from every

stain, for thy weak nature is ever prone to evil.

To-day thou confessest thy sins and to-morrow thou committest again the same sins. Now thou dost purpose to avoid sin, and in an hour's time thou actest as if thou hadst made no resolution.

Beware, my son, lest on account of thy frailty thou neglectest confession and penance for thy venial sins.

Is linen left unwashed because it will be soiled again by further use? Certainly not.

Thus, since thou carriest about with thee a frail body, thou wilt not be long without sin, no matter how careful thou art. But have patience; do not be troubled; pass tranquilly and humbly from sickness to recovery, from even venial sin to penance.

Have frequent recourse to confession. If thou dost rightly confess thy sins, I am faithful and just to forgive them, I do not say seven times but even seventy times seven. My mercies are without number and infinite is the treasure of my goodness.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DAILY MASS

BEHOLD, I am with thee all days my son, to be immolated to the glory of my Father, to be offered for the salvation of men.

Thou art my priest, my sacrificer, set apart chiefly to make this offering and oblation. Be careful therefore to keep thyself free from sin, that thou mayst be prepared to celebrate Mass daily.

Thou shouldst honor my Father and promote his glory. What canst thou offer that redounds more to his honor and glory than the most holy Sacrifice of my Altar? It is indeed the gift of gifts.

Silver, gold, precious stones, the earth, the heavens, the whole world is as a little dust in comparison with this divine oblation.

The ancient sacrifices of calves and lambs are no longer pleasing to the Father, but a body he has prepared for me. This is pleasing to him; this he

loves; this he delights in. He gladly looks upon the face of his Christ.

Daily offer the Son to the Father, God to God, Light to Light. Oh, what joy, what glory dost thou give to my Father when thou sayest Mass; what joy, what glory dost thou deprive him of when thou neglectest to do so!

As thou art a man of God so thou art also a mediator of men, that thou mayst offer sacrifices for their sins. Behold, thou hast near thee the most holy and efficacious holocaust.

There is no debt that cannot be paid by it; no grace that cannot be obtained through it, no malady for which it does not provide a cure.

Oh, what graces dost thou allow thy flock, yea the whole Church of God, to be deprived of, when thou omittest to say Mass!

Therefore, my son, daily ascend to my altar; and the most precious gifts of conversions, amendments of life, remission of sins, consolations and a wonderful impetus to the practice of all the virtues shall descend upon all thy people.

If thou lovest thy flock do not neglect to bestow such great blessings upon them.

Imitate my servant Job. As he daily offered sacrifice for the sins of his children, so do thou daily offer the clean oblation to obtain grace and mercy for my people that I have entrusted to thy care.

It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins. If they are assisted by prayers, how much more by the Mass, which surpasses in value all prayers and sacrifices! If almsgiving extinguishes the fire in which they are being cleansed, how much more will my blood!

See, my son, how easy it is for thee to moderate their sufferings, yea, free them from torment, raise them up to that heaven that they long for, give joy to the angels by their coming, enlarge the assembly of the saints, and increase the number of those who sing the praises of God before his throne.

See, therefore, how hard-hearted thou wouldst be if, by not saying Mass, thou

shouldst deprive the dead of such assistance.

Have pity on them, my son, for their sufferings are great; help them by thy daily Sacrifice. Rest assured that they will not be ungrateful nor forget thee when they shall come into my kingdom and see good things in the land of the living.

And thou thyself, what great graces dost thou not stand in need of in order to work out thy salvation? What helps dost thou not require to worthily and fruitfully perform the duties of thy ministry?

Therefore daily draw near to the table of my altar: there thou shalt find the heavenly antidote which will preserve thee from sin and cool the ardor of thy passions.

There thou shalt receive a wonderful eye-salve to give sight to the eyes of thy mind, a powerful tonic to establish thee in virtue and to strengthen thee against the attacks of the devil.

Daily receive what is daily of benefit to thee. Let not thy soul weary of this

most holy food. Quickly come down. With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with thee.

Receive me joyfully into thy house that salvation may come to it. Do this daily in commemoration of me.

Consider, my son, the example of my saints whose lives were resplendent with true religion, love and piety.

How faithful were Saints Ambrose, Charles Borromeo, Francis de Sales, Francis Xavier, Vincent de Paul and so many others, to the daily celebration of Mass!

What blessings did they not procure for just and sinners through that daily Sacrifice!

What graces and helps did they not thereby daily merit for themselves, aided by which they passed from virtue to virtue even unto my holy Mount!

But, my son, in following their example imitate also their piety. Celebrate daily, but celebrate piously.

The zeal of my Father's house eateth me up; my altar is the altar of the God of virtues. Beware therefore not to

despise it. Beware lest thou draw near to my table from a desire of lucre rather than from true piety.

I am present and behold thee. Do not approach unprepared nor celebrate Mass in a hasty and perfunctory manner. Cursed is he that does the work of the Lord negligently.

Wash thy hands therefore among the innocent. Be free from every stain of soul and body. Humbled for thine indignity, hungry with holy longing, burning with love, full of faith and confidence, compass my altar. Receive and eat; receive and drink: I will remain in thee and thou in me.

If sometimes, my son, through necessity or out of reverence thou abstainest from offering the morning Sacrifice, do not neglect to assist at Mass if it be possible, after the manner of the pious faithful and to make a spiritual communion. Thus thou shalt not lose the fruit of the Sacrifice.

Verily, let it be thy one sorrow to be deprived even for a single day of this holy food.

CHAPTER XXIX

UNWORTHY CELEBRATION

COME to me, my son, and I will refresh thee. But before thou drawest nigh to me prepare thy soul.

I am the Lord terrible and mighty who hateth the wicked and his ways, who judgeth and condemneth the unworthy celebrant fixing upon him through my flesh and blood the malediction of my omnipotent wrath.

Prove thyself therefore, my son, before thou eatest of this bread and drinkest of this chalice, lest thou eat and drink judgment to thyself.

Prove thyself; search thy heart; examine thy paths; and if the way of iniquity is in thee, do not dare, with a defiled conscience, to cross the threshold of my holy sanctuary. Humble thyself for thine unworthiness; and though thou mayst seem to thyself to be contrite, do not approach to my altar without first going to confession.

I am, my son, thy most meek and lov-

ing King, who have showered so many blessings upon thee; and thou betrayest me with a kiss! I am the Lord thy God; and thou dost deliver me up to Satan, who is in possession of thy heart.

I am thy Saviour; and thou wouldst again crucify me! I am most holy; and thou wouldst place me in the unclean tomb of a filthy conscience!

O friend! whereto art thou come? It were better for thee that thou hadst never been born.

Far be it from me, O Lord, such iniquity! Rather let my tongue cleave to my jaws, my right hand be forgotten; take from me my life rather than permit me to perpetrate such a crime!

It were indeed more fitting that a most vile creature like myself should die, than that thou, my Creator, shouldst be thus contemptuously trodden under foot by me.

O Lord most high! O Lord of lords! Who is it that would thus betray thee?

Who is it, my son? Would that it

were only one or even two! But alas! how many there are, who not once but daily, thus betray and crucify me!

Daily the proud, the voluptuous, the dissolute, the avaricious, and those guilty of other crimes, approach my altar.

These, my son, touch me with impure hands, receive me with unclean lips, usher me into a foul heart and pollute the blood of my testament. I am tortured in their company.

I could indeed free myself from them, launch my thunderbolts against them, scatter and destroy them! But they would perish, and I wish not the death of the wicked. Oh, that they would be converted and live rightly!

O wicked generation! How long shall I be so near to you! How long will you continue to err in heart! How long will you not spare me!

Verily, if you will not be converted, my mercy shall be turned into judgment against you. I have sworn in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest. (Ps. XCIV-11.)

CHAPTER XXX

PREPARATION FOR MASS

MY son, prepare for me a dining-room, for I keep the Pasch with thee, and it pleases me to abide in thy house.

Let a royal guest-chamber be prepared for the King who is expected, a rich apartment for the Friend who is coming to visit thee.

I, my son, am thy gentle King, thy Beloved that feeds among the lilies. I am thy God whom the heaven of heavens is unworthy to contain.

Wherefore, the more I humble myself for love of thee by descending to thy nothingness, the more shouldst thou arouse thyself to ascend in spirit.

Freedom from sin is not enough, therefore by devout recollection enrich thy soul with the gold of charity and perfume it with the myrrh of holy piety.

To prepare a rich and beautiful room for one's guest is a proof of the sincerity of one's love for him.

O ye who though not cold are nevertheless lukewarm; O ye indifferent and tepid souls; who give scarcely a thought to my visit, who habitually pass from your houses and domestic cares to the foot of mine altar without any becoming preparation: what shall I say to you?

Behold how your tables are arranged from early morning for your guests. The food is prepared for days in advance; but when I come to visit you, you do not spend even a short quarter of an hour in preparing your dining-hall.

Nevertheless those who come to your feast do not love you nor honor you, but I love you in very truth.

They come to you to feast upon your viands; but I come that you may feast upon me.

When they come to you they consume your goods; but I come to you to strengthen you and add to your riches. Nevertheless you have honored them and you have dishonored me.

O sons of men, how long will you be hard of heart? Why do you love vanity and make so little of my goodness?

Your souls weary of me as of the lightest food.

O foolish men, who has deceived you? O tepid souls, whom I can scarcely endure! Soon I will begin to vomit you out of my mouth.

Arise, my son, arise quickly; do not grow lukewarm like these but hasten to come out to meet me.

Come, and meditating upon my greatness and thine own vileness, proclaim thyself, like the centurion, unworthy.

Come, and burning with love like Zacheus, receive me joyfully into thy house, trusting that through my visit, salvation may come to thee.

Come, and like the just Abel, offer thy gift with a right intention.

Thus thy holocaust shall be fat. It will give glory to the Father, honor to the saints, joy to heaven, assistance to the Church, salvation to thyself, grace to the just, conversion to sinners, help to the needy and rest to the faithful departed.

CHAPTER XXXI

THANKSGIVING AFTER MASS

I THE eternal Word, made flesh, the living bread that came down from heaven, the true light, full of grace and truth, of power and fortitude, have taken up my abode in thee, my son. I, whose, mercies are without number, am with thee and my reward is with me.

I am with thee that I may save thee, that I may free thee from the hand of the wicked, that I may redeem thee from the hand of the strong.

Oh, if thou but knew the gift of God, and who it is that reposes in thy breast; verily, thy heart would become as liquid wax in my sight, all the faculties of thy soul would be absorbed in ecstasy, and thine eyes would be suffused with tears of gratitude.

Satiated with heavenly sweetness, thou wouldst gladly bid adieu to all earthly pleasures.

Exalted above thyself, in silent rapture thou wouldst repose in my love,

ardently embrace thy Beloved, and joyfully offer thyself to him without any restriction.

Surely, from so kind a Father thou wouldst confidently hope to obtain an abundant increase of virtue.

From so powerful a King thou wouldst assuredly ask for all the graces of assistance necessary to overcome thine enemies.

While Jesus dwells in thee, whilst he is, as it were, thy very own, thou wouldst not fail to offer, with the liveliest sentiments of devotion, so excellent a gift to thy heavenly Father.

Yea, thou wouldst invite the whole court of heaven to join with thee in proclaiming glory in the highest to thy Beloved. And when the sacred species were absorbed, oh, how keenly wouldst thou regret to be separated from the corporal presence of thy Saviour.

There is, my son, no nation, however great, that has its gods so near to it, as I am to my priests.

How comes it then, that many among them, despising my love or at least not

esteeming it as they should, will not spend even a short space of time in praising me who am present in their breasts? Scarcely have they left my altar, than they go out of the church to attend to worldly affairs. The heavenly food is still in their mouths and already they forget the good God who feeds them. O ingrates! O sons of light, less prudent than the children of darkness!

The children of this world, when they are visited by a king or some influential person, detain him lest he might suddenly take his departure. They greet him kindly, they express their joy at his coming, they offer him hospitality, they seek favors of him, rejoicing at the privilege of being able to speak face to face with a prince, to show their love and respect for him and to reveal to him their wants. All this they do, mark you, to honor a mortal man and to receive a corruptible reward.

O children of light, foolish and slow of heart to believe! The men of Nineve will rise up against you on the last day; for when Jonas walked among them and

preached to them, they were filled with compunction, and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

The queen of the East will rise up and condemn you; for she came from the ends of the world to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. And, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

The men of Jerusalem will rise up against you; for when I conversed with them they wished to make me king. And, behold, I the King of kings, your God, am within you and you go away and leave me alone and without honor.

Wilt thou also go away, my son? Far be it, far be it.

When thou leavest the altar return to listen to me, who have the words of eternal life, that thou mayst taste and see how sweet I am, that thy heart may burn within thee while I speak to thee.

With all the powers of thy soul, adore me the Lord thy God who art present in thee; sing with the angels and the archangels hymns in my honor, and do not depart from me until through thy praises thou shalt merit to obtain my blessing.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE LOVE OF GOD

THOU shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. This do, my son, and thou shalt live.

But if thou failest in this, amen I say to thee, thou shalt not enter into the joy of thy Lord, thou shalt not dwell in his tabernacle, thou shalt not repose in his holy mount, thou shalt not see his face.

Thou believest this, thou teachest this; but how dost thou act, my son? Lovest thou me? Pastor of my flock, lovest thou me more than these? Art thou, who must enkindle others, thyself on fire? Art thou not as one saying and not doing?

What shall I say, O Lord? How shall I reply to thee? Thou hast announced to me a wonderful thing. On this dependeth the whole law.

O Lord, enter not into judgment with

thy servant. Grant to me what thou demandest and command what thou wilt.

Teach me to love thee so that, even though late, at least with assurance I may be able to reply: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

Thou hast the right disposition, my son, since thou so ardently desirest my love; for, if thou hast not charity, whatever else thou mayst be thou art nothing, whatever else thou possessest will profit thee nothing.

I have said to thee: Lovest thou me? But thou hast trembled, thou hast not dared to reply. Again I question thee, and thou art silent.

Thou hast seen Peter affirming that, for love of me, he was ready to suffer imprisonment and even death; and shortly afterwards thou hast seen him denying me. Wherefore thou hast feared to give an answer like his.

Good, my son; but if thy lips dare not answer let thy works do so.

By them I may know whether thou lovest the Lord thy God, not in word

and in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

He who truly loves a friend, often thinks of him and freely converses with him.

Dost thou love to call to mind my presence, to converse freely with me in prayer, to visit me in my church?

If thou gladly dost this, have confidence, my son: thou lovest.

He who truly loves a friend will willingly reveal to him the inmost secrets of his heart, seek counsel from him, gladly break bread with him and rejoice to welcome him to a seat at his own table.

Dost thou, my son, reveal to me with confidence thy misery and sorrow? Dost thou freely confess with simplicity and contrition in the sacred tribunal thy failings and thy sins? Dost thou often ask advice of me and faithfully comply with it?

Dost thou habitually draw near to my altar with joy, and through charity to the poor cheerfully admit me to thy table?

If thou in truth dost this, have confidence, my son: verily, thou lovest.

He who truly loves a friend obeys his

behests with promptitude and precision, and carefully abstains from anything that would cause him displeasure.

Dost thou, my son, faithfully keep my commandments? Dost thou, as from the presence of a serpent, flee from sin which I punish with such awful vengeance? If thou art faithful in this, my son, have confidence: thou truly lovest.

Lastly, he who is so devoted to his friend that he is ready to bestow all his goods upon him, that he ever strives to be in all things pleasing to him, that he would even sacrifice his life for him—he, my son, possesses the highest charity; for greater love than this it is impossible to have.

Art thou ever zealous to do the thing that is pleasing to me? Dost thou plan and perform thy works for my greater glory? Art thou willing to abandon all things for my sake? Art thou ready to encounter even death itself for me and for mine, to choose rather to die than to offend me and to gladly give thy life for the salvation and the sanctification of my flock?

If so, rejoice and exult: thou truly lovest, thou lovest much.

But, my son, no man can serve two masters.

If thou lendest thyself more readily to worldly thoughts than to holy recollection; if thou preferest to hear and to speak about temporal affairs rather than about me and my interests; if thou givest greater care and attention to business matters than to the duties of thy sacred calling, if conversation with worldlings is more to thy taste than a visit to the Blessed Sacrament; if thy step is more eager to the banquets of men than to the altar of thy God; if thou art more concerned about the luxury and comfort of thy home than the wretchedness and want of my poor, the consolation and salvation of my brethren; if thou fearest disease and pain more than sin, if thou givest the sweat of thy brow more readily for earthly gain than for the overcoming of evil, the salvation of souls and the glory of God:

If thou dost this, what shall I say of thee? O my son! thou declarest indeed

that thou lovest me: yes, with thy lips thou honorest me, but thy heart is far from me.

O wretched, blind and foolish man! thou lovest only thyself; me thou dost not love.

Think of it, my son. Am I not the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour?

Was not thy heart created to love goodness? Knowest thou not that I am the highest and only good, kindness itself, justice, clemency, meekness, wisdom, beauty, knowledge, yea, the plentitude of every perfection?

Does not the ox know its master? Hast thou forgotten that I am thy Creator, thy King, thy Father, who have made thee, nourished thee, preserved thee and created the whole world to supply thy wants?

Does not the rescued sheep love the good pastor? Am I not thy most loving Pastor? When thou didst go astray did I not follow thee through briars and over stony ground, did I not seek thee, find

thee, and with joy carry thee back to the fold?

Does not the slave love him who redeems him? Knowest thou not, my son, that I have redeemed thee not with gold or silver but with mine own blood?

Yea more, my son, have not I, thy God, chosen thee for my minister, for my priest, and thus honored and exalted thee above all the kings of the earth?

What more could I have done for thee that I have not done? Why therefore dost thou forget me? Why dost thou not love me?

CHAPTER XXXIII

MENTAL PRAYER

IT is thy duty, my son, to be instant in prayer and in the ministry of the word. I have passed the night in prayer in order to teach thee to pray and to pray without ceasing.

How necessary it is that I should direct all thy ways and all thine actions in the ministry that thou hast assumed! How great it is! How holy it is! How dangerous it is!

Keep, therefore, the eye of thy mind ever raised to thy Father who is in heaven, to me who sitteth at his right hand, that thence aid may ever come to thee, that thou mayst clothe thyself with divine power, that thou mayst take to thyself wings like the eagle, that thou mayst run and not weary, walk and not faint, that thou mayst follow faithfully in my footsteps and not stray from the path.

Let prayer, my son, watch by thy couch during the night and rise with

thee in the morning; let it say with thee the psalms of thy breviary. In church let it precede and follow thee; let it sit down with thee when thou eatest and drinkest and when thou givest thanks after a frugal meal.

Let it pass with thee into thy daily labors; let it be with thee in thy study; let it in the evening purify thee from the stains that thou mayst have contracted from the dust of the world; when sleep comes upon thee let it close thine eyes; let it dwell ever with thee.

Mark well, my son, I do not commend merely that form of prayer that the law obliges thee to recite with attention and devotion, but especially the secret prayer of the soul.

In the closed chamber of thy heart thou shouldst pray to thy Father. There at all times and in all places thou canst raise thy mind to me, offer to me thyself and all thou hast, lay thy petitions before me, and with sentiments of love and humility cast thyself in adoration at my feet.

Let this prayer be for thee the offer-

ing of thy life to God; in all thy works let it be thine inseparable companion.

This is, my son, the water that becomes a fountain springing up unto eternal life.

If thou wishest to possess it, come, I will show thee the fountain of gardens, the well of living waters whence it is drawn.

That fountain and well is the consideration of my commandments; to this thou shouldst devote some time every day.

Do not fail to choose some point of Christian doctrine for thy daily meditation. Place it before thee, meditate upon it in my presence, apply it to thyself, and from this consideration deduce a practical rule of conduct.

Here thou wilt find water; and if thou drinkest of it, like the irrigated field that brings forth fruit in season, all thy works will be sweetly and wonderfully sanctified.

O my son; neglect not mental prayer, lest thou become as salt that has lost its savor, as a lamp without oil or without light.

What answer shalt thou make when summoned to my tribunal thou shalt be judged by me and accused by thy flock, who shall say: We have perished because we had no man who would put us into the pond.

For this reason with desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is no one that considereth in his heart.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF MENTAL PRAYER

EVERYONE has his special gift from God, one after this manner, another after that.

All, my son, cannot make the same progress in mental prayer. Some there are to whom it is given to reach the height of lofty contemplation, but this is not demanded of anyone; it is reserved for those whom my Father thus attracts.

If thou dost not feel thyself in a special manner drawn and called to this devotional altitude, do not aspire to it; remain in the ranks of the simple and deem thyself unworthy to be raised up to this high state.

If thou canst accomplish only a little in the way of meditation, do that little well and thou wilt make much progress.

Say not, my son; I cannot do it; I know not how to pray. If thou canst not with St. John contemplate heavenly and divine mysteries, at least thou canst with

Mary Magdalene cast thyself at my feet and, with a contrite and humble heart, ask forgiveness of the sins by which thou hast so often offended me.

If thou canst not with St. Paul rise aloft to the third heaven, thou canst at least remain with him close to me on the cross by crucifying thy vices and concupiscences.

If thou hast not wings like the eagle that mounts upwards to the stars, thou canst at least have the opinions of the lowly dove that makes its nest in the hollow places of the wall; thou canst at least meditate upon my wounds and humiliations.

Have confidence, my son; thou shalt acquire more sanctity by meditating upon my passion than all the learned men and philosophers in their study of sublime mysteries.

If thou canst not say thy prayers and make thy meditations without distractions, proceed nevertheless; offer them to me.

Be a man of good will; my ear shall hearken to the preparation of thy heart.

Acceptable to me shall be that small mite which, according to thy means, thou droppest into my treasury.

Let no involuntary distractions deter thee from completing what thou hast commenced. Persevere in finishing the prayer that thou hast begun in my presence; and do not shorten the allotted time of thy meditation.

Be not cast down, but humbly acknowledge thyself to be unworthy of greater consolation.

Say with confidence and simplicity: O Lord, inasmuch as through my own fault I may have given occasion to these distractions, I am sincerely sorry.

But inasmuch as they proceed from thy will I recognize in them the just punishment of my sins, my past and present faults and negligences.

Willingly therefore will I accept from thy hand this cross, this dryness, this distraction, this exile of my poor heart.

Then again, my son, there is another simple means appropriate to thy needs. Take up a book and read it.

Supported by this, as by a staff, the

attention of thy mind will be steadied and thy wandering imagination more quickly arrested.

Rivet thine attention upon this pious reading by pondering over each sentence. In a short time thine intelligence will be enlightened and thine affections aroused by considering over and over again what thou readest, not for the purpose of learning or studying the doctrine but to obtain an increase of charity and virtue.

Digest well during the day the food of which thou hast partaken; recall to mind the truths which thou hast considered; renew thy good resolutions that they may be more efficacious; and inflame thy heart more and more by holy ejaculations.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE TIME FOR MENTAL PRAYER

MY son, meditate upon me at the break of dawn and I will come to thine aid.

O priest, gather wood every morning that the fire upon my altar may be fed and ever burn brightly.

Meditation made in the morning dispels darkness, opens the soul to divine light, and consecrates the first thoughts and actions of the day to me, thy sovereign Lord, whom, first and before all and above all, every creature must serve.

O my son, if I am thy treasure let thy heart be in me from the first moment of the day.

Hear, my son, and blush for shame. Even the pagans, when they turned to their gods at the approach of dawn, used to say: Let our first thought be to Jupiter. Shalt thou, the son of light, be less wise than the children of darkness?

Behold the sun. Early in the morning it rises and proclaims my glory. Would

it not be a shame if it should find thee lying slothfully in bed and thus surpassing thee in diligence in my service?

Let thy praises ascend to me before the rising of the sun. Before that time the manna should be collected for my people; for after sunrise it melts away. Thus later, prayer is lacking in force and efficacy.

Wherefore hasten to arise and begin thy meditation.

In the early morning the wings of the dove are freer. Thou shalt be better able to ascend to me.

The morning eye is clearer. It sees what the sight blurred by earthly dust does not perceive.

The morning ear is keener. It hears what that wearied by worldly tumult does not discern.

The morning heart is purer and more pliant. It is alive to those movements of grace to which the heart, soiled by the dust of the sordid world, does not respond.

Therefore give thy heart to resort early to me who made thee, and to offer

up thy prayer in the sight of the Most High, and I will fill thee with the spirit of understanding and pour forth the words of my wisdom. In prayer thou shalt confess to me and I will direct thy counsel.

But that thou mayst approach me the more promptly in the morning, prepare, my son, thy soul the night before. Read before retiring, the subject of thy meditation, recall it to mind the first thing upon awakening. Thus thou wilt more easily offer to me thy heart and the first fruits of thy mind.

Rise promptly, and as the deer thirsts for the fountain of waters so shall thy soul long to adore me. Then with fervor of spirit place thyself in my presence and say to me: Behold here I am!

Being now in my presence thou shalt see and shalt abound and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged.

Now, thou shalt blush with confusion on account of my sanctity and thine own sinfulness, thou shalt be humbled in the presence of my beauty and goodness and thine own deformity and ingratitude.

Now, thou shalt eagerly draw thy sword against the enemies of thy soul, thou shalt rest in my love and exult in my praises.

Behold, my son, how I am present to those who meditate upon me in the morning. Wherefore approach me at the break of dawn and thou shalt be enlightened.

If, however, on account of pressing business thou art unable to make thy morning meditation, remember that I am present at all times to those who pray, and will give food to those that fear me.

Do not, therefore, remain fasting all the day, but as soon as possible nourish thy soul with prayer.

Is not, my dearly beloved, the soul more than the body? Yes, more, very much more.

Be wise, therefore, and say: If at the accustomed hour I am prevented from taking bodily nourishment, I will not neglect to take the necessary food later on.

If I am absolutely prevented from taking my usual meal, I will at least see

to it that my bodily vigor is sustained by frequent refections.

Thus shall I treat thee, my soul. Every morning I will give thee food. But if I cannot do so then, I will see to it that later on thou receive nourishment.

And if occasionally there be no time for this spiritual meal I will at least not neglect to refresh thee by frequent and fervent ejaculations.

CHAPTER XXXVI

VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

MY son, I am thy God and thine all. I, who have my throne in heaven, dwell with thee on earth in my Church in order that whenever thou wishest thou mayst find in me life and draw salvation from thy Lord. O my son! I have not done so to every nation.

If thou wert dwelling in some remote pagan land and it were announced to thee that there was a certain people with whom the true God deigned to dwell so that anyone could at any hour approach freely to him and converse with him face to face, verily thou wouldst exclaim: O blessed people of whom such a Lord is their God!

In thine ecstasy thou wouldst cry out: I, too, will hasten to this people and witness this wonderful sight.

How lovely are the tabernacles of this God! My soul longeth and fainteth for his courts; I will arise and I will go to him.

Go forth out of thy country and from thy kindred; come and let us see this word that has come to pass; come and let us offer him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh.

My son, behold I stand at thy gate. Thou needst not fly over the mountain, sail over the sea, leave thy country nor abandon thy kindred in order to be a sharer in so great a happiness.

The door is open for thee and no guards block the way; ever and at any hour all things are ready; mine eyes are watching; mine ears are attentive, my heart is open.

Come, I desire to see thee, for my delights are to be with thee.

Come, I am longingly waiting for thee that I may give ear to thee, that I may hear thy prayers. Come to the Lord and offer him thy vows.

Come to the fountain of water springing up into eternal life, and wine and milk shall be given to thee without price.

Come to him who multiplies the loaves in the desert and thy soul shall be filled as with marrow and fatness.

Come and I will fill thee with good things; and a good measure of graces, pressed down and shaken together and running over will I give unto thy bosom.

My son, if thou wert an ordinary man I would say to thee: Come and adore; for it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore and him only shalt thou serve.

But thou art a priest, a man of the Church, a man of the sanctuary, a man of the altar, a man of God. It is thy duty to weep between the porch and the altar.

It is thy duty to stand before me in the day of my anger and to placate me, and to offer up prayers for the sins of all thy people.

It is thy duty to do violence to heaven, that dew may drop down from above, and the clouds may rain upon thy people a rich shower of my blessings. It is thy duty to praise and to bless the Lord.

O my son! O my priest! O minister of the Lord of heaven! Wilt thou leave me all alone.

O friend of thy Saviour! Shall his conversation have bitterness for thee, and his company tediousness?

O pupil! why wilt thou flee from so good a Master?

O Lord! O God, if I may say it, so prodigal of thyself! Oh, wretched would I be if, after heaping so many coals of fire upon my head, I should be cold towards thee and refuse to approach thee!

Who ever heard anything like this? Thou permittest me, who am not worthy to enter under thy roof, to come into thine inner court yea more, thou exhortest and compellest me to enter.

I will do thy will, O Lord. I will go, I will visit this place where thou dwellest, my King and my God!

How can I abstain from such an act of piety when I remember that all gathered about thee when thou conversedst visibly with men, when I think of the crowds coming out of every town of Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem; when I read that so great was the multitude about thee that the paralytic had to be lowered through the roof that he might be placed before thee?

Yes, Lord, every evening I will come like Mary Magdalen to see the sepulchre in which my living Saviour humbly and lovingly dwells.

I will adore thee on bended knees, I will accuse myself of my iniquity, I will bless thy name with a canticle and will magnify thee with praise.

Thou shalt rule me, O my God, in this place of pasture, and nothing shall be wanting to me.

Here I shall learn the paths of thy justice; here I shall be taught not to fear evil, here thy rod and thy staff shall comfort me.

Here I shall become strong against all who afflict me; here thy mercy shall compass me that it may follow me all the days of my life, until I shall dwell in thy heavenly home unto length of days.

CHAPTER XXXVII

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

JUDGE thyself, my son, that thou mayst not be judged.

In the evening examine thy conscience. Thou shouldst be ever ready; for, in what hour thou thinkest not, I, the Son of Man, will come.

Perhaps this night I will require thy soul of thee. See that thou art ready to give an account of thy stewardship.

If thou livest until to-morrow, thou must stand at my altar. See that thou art free from every stain.

Take, therefore, thy soul into thy hands. Consider carefully how it is with it; what sins it may have committed by thought, word or deed against me or against thy neighbor or against thyself.

Is it soiled with dust of the world? Brush off that dust by contrition and a new resolution of amendment.

Alas, it may be, which God forbid, that by some mortal sin it has gone down into the depths.

If so, my son, weep and detest thy

fault; resolve to go to confession as soon as possible and to amend thy life, that the sun may not go down upon thy sin and that I may not take vengeance upon thee in the midst of darkness.

How many there are who meet with a sudden death; how many go to bed in health and that very night descend into hell, because they had fallen asleep with mortal sin upon their souls!

What madness to remain in a condition in which thou wouldst fear to die! Who knows but that sleep which thou takest in this deadly state may be for thee the beginning of eternal death?

I advanced in wisdom and age and grace before my Father and men.

Thou also, my son, shouldst make progress from day to day. If thou dost not make progress thou shalt fall away; and how canst thou make progress if thou dost not observe thy faults, pay attention to them and strive to correct them?

Enter therefore into thy heart in the evening and sedulously examine thy conscience. Consider whence thou comest

and whither thou goest, how thou art living, what thou dost and what thou omittest to do; how far thou art advancing daily towards perfection, or declining from it; what thoughts mostly engage thine attention and by what temptations art thou most bitterly assailed by the evil one.

This my saints, when they dwelt upon this earth, frequently did. Hence it was that they made such great progress in virtue.

The more frequently they fell through frailty the more quickly they arose again, the more manfully they braced themselves for the conflict and the more earnestly they sought mine assistance.

Thus the just became still more just and the holy still more holy; thus their trifling faults became rather an incentive to virtue than an obstacle to perfection.

Do likewise, my son. When all is quiet and the mind is free from the cares of the day, purify thy soul.

O Lord, mine offences are not hidden from thee. Thou hast put my feet in

stocks and hast observed all my paths and hast considered the steps of my feet.

Send forth thy light and thy truth; may I know myself as I am known to thee, and knowing myself may I daily censure myself and correct my faults, until, undefiled in the way, I may become as far as my weakness will permit, perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE FAITHFUL PERFORMANCE OF ORDINARY ACTIONS

I MY son, have done all things well. And, if thou wishest to attain to that sanctity without which no one shall behold me, thou must endeavor above all things to perform every action carefully and holily.

Consider that thy whole life is nothing more than a repeated round of daily acts.

If therefore thou performest these with due perfection, without doubt thy whole life will be holy and perfect.

O my son! with what a spirit of zeal ought not this thought to inflame thee: I must perform so many works every day, every month, every year.

If I accomplish each one of these in a proper manner I shall produce that many acts of virtue, I shall merit that many more degrees of glory.

If, however, I act in a heedless and perfunctory way, I shall lose my time my labor, my reward and lose them beyond all repair.

O death, thou art drawing nigh! and when thou shalt come how greatly shall I rejoice if I have done all things well, but what remorse will be mine if I have done them badly!

Look, my son, at very economical men or those who are passionately fond of money. See how careful they are that nothing is lost or that nothing is wasted, but that all things even the smallest and most trifling are put to profit.

See how others carefully occupy their time lest a single moment of it should be squandered.

Imitate them, my son, and learn from the prudent of this world the true wisdom of the sons of God.

Learn to perform all thine actions, even the slightest and most trivial, in such a manner that they may not lose their reward.

Learn to put to good use every quarter of an hour of time that it may bear fruit for thee in eternity.

Courage, my son. Those things which are most ordinary in themselves love renders all the more extraordinary;

those things which seem of small account the intention makes all the more valuable.

To do great things without love is vain and useless; but to do small things in a perfect manner is most acceptable in my sight.

What will happen on the day of judgment, my son? That thou surely knowest. Then I shall render to every one according to his works.

Have a care, therefore, that all thy works are good, that thou mayst make thyself secure against my punishments and vengeance and most certain of my praise and reward.

Of necessity thou must perform thine ordinary actions. Whether thou dost them well or not, they must nevertheless be done.

In any case thou must pray, read the office, celebrate Mass and administer the sacraments.

If thou dost all these things badly or negligently thou shalt gain no merit; yea, even thou incurrest damnation. Nevertheless, thou must bear the burden.

Do not, my son, thus lose the merit of thy work. See to it that thy labor is not in vain.

If thou performest thy works in a right and holy manner the labor will not be any greater. In fact, the task will be lighter and through it thou shalt nevertheless win thy crown.

Have in every action a pure intention and propose to thyself in all things the greater glory of God.

Put away lukewarmness and apply thyself to the work of the moment with all fervor and alacrity as if thou hadst but that one thing to do.

Thus acting, my son, thou shalt not gather together for thyself wood and straw and stubble to be consigned to the flames, but gold and silver and precious stones to be offered upon the altar of heaven to me who sit upon the throne.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

I MY son, fill heaven and earth; my vision embraces the whole world.

I observe all the ways of men, and I never cease to trace their footsteps; yea more, I search the reins and the hearts, and no thought is hidden from me.

Fly, my son, where thou wilt, thou shalt not hide from my spirit, thou shalt not flee from my face.

If thou ascendest into heaven, I am there; if thou descendest into hell, I am present.

If thou shouldst fly to the uttermost parts of that sea, there my right hand shall lead thee, and my right arm shall support thee.

If thou shouldst hide thyself in the blackest darkness and call upon the night to protect thee, that night shall be as bright as day in my sight, and the darkness shall be as light to me.

Fly where thou wilt, in me ever shalt

thou live and move and have thy being.

Ever arm thyself with this thought, my son, and thou shalt decline from evil and do good.

In the presence of a human judge who can kill the body, the thief does not steal.

In the presence of his father, a bad child keeps out of mischief.

In the presence of his employer, a lazy workman does not waste his time.

O my beloved! if the presence of a superior, or even the gaze of some looker-on, can restrain the wills of evil men, what a check upon thee should be the thought of the presence of an all-powerful God who is thy Judge, a terrible Judge indeed, who can cast both body and soul into hell!

But what will happen if thou givest little heed to this matter, and art unmindful of the all-seeing eye of thy heavenly Judge?

With the walls whitewashed on the outside, with the exterior of the chalice purified, thou wilt think thyself secure.

That is, it will suffice for thee that nothing may be detected in thy life that

may lessen thy reputation or attach to thee the stigma of wrong-doing.

Thus, in the public eye and to outward seeming, thou shalt be sober, chaste, modest and charitable; at the hour appointed thou wilt officiate at the church services and perform thine accustomed duties, but in private thou wilt give little care to the priestly rule of life.

In thy ministry, honoring me with thy lips thou shalt dishonor me with thy heart; hearing confessions thou wilt care little for the salvation of the penitent; preaching thou shalt be little solicitous about the fruit of thy words.

Since men behold but the face, thou wilt consider it quite sufficient if thou presentest ever a pious countenance.

O wicked and most detestable hypocrisy, that fosters the forgetfulness of the presence of God and banishes and destroys the remembrance of him!

In all thy works therefore, my son, be mindful of God, and thou shalt serve him with a right heart, and restrain thy feet from every evil way.

Be mindful of him in the morning and thou shalt preserve thine awakened soul from evil thoughts, and conquer the body's inordinate desire for sleep.

Be mindful of him when thou kneelest down to pray, and thou shalt banish distractions.

Be mindful of him when thou goest about thy work, and laboring for the Master thou shalt receive a reward from him.

Be mindful of him in the sacred ministry, and thou shalt labor not for self but to promote the glory of God and to save souls.

Be mindful of him at thy meals, and thou shalt not transgress the limits of sobriety.

Be mindful of him in thy recreations and thou shalt avoid forbidden pleasures.

Be mindful of him in thy conversation and thou shalt place a holy guard upon thy lips and thou shalt hedge thine ears about with thorns.

Be mindful of him when thou goest abroad, and thou shalt faithfully observe

the covenant that thou madest with thine eyes at the baptismal font and at ordination.

Be mindful of him in temptation and thou shalt be freed from evil.

In a word, my son, think of me and I will think of thee.

With the desolation of iniquity are souls made desolate, because there is no one who thinks of the presence of God in his heart.

Remember, therefore, my presence, and thou shalt not only decline from evil but be fervent in the accomplishment of good.

Amen, I say to thee, remember.

CHAPTER XL

CONFIDENCE IN GOD

MY mercies are without number, my son, and infinite is the treasure of my goodness.

I, it is, who deliver those who trust in me; no one has hoped in me in vain.

Hope, therefore, in the Lord; have confidence and thou shalt never be confounded.

O Lord, my support and my refuge, how sweet indeed is thy voice!

Thanks be to thee, my most loving Father, since thou willest to be mine aid in the tribulations that sorely afflict me!

For my soul, O Lord, has been in anguish within me and my spirit has been troubled.

I have viewed the years of my life and I beheld them weighed down with many iniquities, and have said to myself: What shall I do or whither shall I go since God is my Judge?

If the just man shall scarcely be saved,

what shall become of me, a sinner who has transgressed beyond measure?

I remembered my sins against thee, a terrible and all-seeing God, and realizing how little contrition I have had, how little penance I had done, I said: Behold, I shall be weighed in the balance and found wanting.

I considered the dangers of the world, the continual temptations of the devil and the never-ceasing rebellions of the flesh, and I cried out: Frail that I am, weak that I am, how shall I pass through these unscathed, how shall I escape so many traps?

I thought of the duties and the burdens of the priesthood, and again I cried out: How shall I render to my God what I owe him in this most holy calling?

I meditated upon the gratuity of thy grace and of thine aids, and, almost discouraged, I exclaimed: Is it possible for me to do what my God has commanded me.

May it not be that one day he will abandon me and I shall fall? May it not be that God will turn his face from

me and I shall perish in mine iniquity?

Thinking of these things in my heart, I confess, O Lord, that if thou hadst not comforted me I should have almost despaired.

Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord. Blessed art thou, my son, since I have inspired thee with that holy fear which is the beginning of wisdom.

Fear, for the more thou fearest the more prompt I shall be to hasten to thine aid.

Have confidence, for the more thou trustest in me the more shalt thou enjoy my special protection.

All things are possible to me, my son, and there is no one who can resist my will.

If thou doest what in thee lies to please me, confidently hope for salvation from me.

Let thy sins be ever so great, if thou repentest of them and abstainest from them, confidently hope for forgiveness, knowing that I, the Lord, have sworn saying: But if the wicked will do

penance for all his sins which he has committed and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live and not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done.

Have confidence, therefore, knowing that I did not hesitate to say to the weeping adultress: Thy sins are forgiven thee;

Knowing that I immediately replied to the penitent thief: To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Remember the father of that prodigal of whom I spoke to thee of old.

Did not that kind parent bestow upon that tear-stained penitent son the kiss of full forgiveness, yea more, show to him the most evident marks of tender affection?

Am I, my son, not infinitely more loving and forgiving than that father?

O thou, who in thy blindness canst not comprehend the immensity of my mercy, how canst thou dare to distrust my goodness?

However great may be the dangers by

which thou art surrounded, however numerous may be the wiles and assaults of the devil, however much the sting of the flesh may beset thee, if thou avoidest the occasions of sin and hast recourse to the remedies that I have suggested to thee, confidently look forward to victory, knowing that I have given mine angels charge over him who hopes in me, to keep him in all his ways, that in their hands they should bear him up lest he dash his foot against a stone.

Trust and have confidence, my son, and thou shalt be overshadowed with my shoulders and compassed with the shield of my strength.

Hope, have confidence, and thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk, and trample under foot the lion and the dragon.

However formidable may be the burden of the priesthood, and arduous its duties, however frail and weak thou mayst be, do not, my son, lose courage. So long as thy heart is ready for every good work, so long as thou laborest as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,

proceed with confidence and do not fear, knowing that they who hope in the Lord shall clothe themselves with strength, shall take wings like the eagle, shall run and not labor, shall walk and not faint.

Though the direction of souls is the art of arts, nevertheless to the priest of good will who is devoted to prayer and study, my grace is sufficient that he may rightly and adequately fulfill the duties of his sacred ministry.

However gratuitous my grace may be, if thou seekest it in humble persevering prayer, rest assured that thy God will aid thee on every occasion and in every necessity.

Remember that I, who have commanded thee to avoid evil and do good, am ever faithful.

Ask, therefore, and it shall be given to thee, knock and it shall be opened unto thee.

Heaven and earth shall pass away but my word shall not pass. Do not, therefore, fear.

Have I not, my son, given my precious life for even wicked men?

Have I not died for thee when thou wast yet a sinner?

Whilst thou wast yet mine enemy, have I not reconciled thee to my Father by my death?

Could I have given thee a greater proof of my love?

How canst thou who art already justified in my blood doubt that thou shalt be saved by me from wrath, that thou shalt obtain the forgiveness of thy sins?

How canst thou who art good and faithful fear that I will refuse to hear thee, to answer thee and to help thee in the midst of trials, temptations and dangers?

Surely thou knowest, my son, that in such circumstances thy mother would not abandon thee. How much less would I.

Yea more, should she even forget thee, nevertheless I will not forget thee.

I, who have made thee, will bear with thee, will support thee and save thee.

CHAPTER XLI

STUDY AND READING

ATTEND to reading and doctrine, my son. As the bird was born to fly and man to labor, so the priest is set apart for learning and piety.

Think not that because thou hast said the office of the day, made thy meditation and celebrated Mass, thou mayst with impunity devote the rest of thy time to recreation and trivial affairs.

By no means, my son; for thy lips shall keep knowledge, and if thou spurnest knowledge it will spurn thee.

I have given thee time, not that thou shouldst waste it, but that thou shouldst restore it to me with interest at the judgment. Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go hence till thou payest the last farthing.

The people will seek the law from thy mouth. Therefore study my law and all Scripture which is profitable to instruct in justice; ponder well my words.

Thou must convince those who deny

the truth; therefore learn the Catholic dogmas and their proofs.

Thou must devote thyself to the ministry of the word, thou must be diligent in exhorting; search therefore the discourses of learned priests and become acquainted with their proverbs.

Thou must forgive or retain sins, cure the ills of the soul; therefore seek wisdom from the wise and science from the learned.

Study, that thou mayst announce my doctrines and not thine to thy flock.

Study, that when the wolf shall come and shall strive to scatter and snatch the sheep, thou mayst not be as a dumb dog that cannot bark.

Study, that offering guidance to the blind, thou mayst not be thyself blind and fall with him into the ditch.

Study, that thou mayst be familiar with the ceremonies of the Mass and the manner of administering the sacraments.

Knowledge acquired by pious reading and sacred studies is an infinite treasure through which we are made partakers of the friendship of God.

Behold how indefatigably St. Paul, St. Ambrose, St. Thomas, the Venerable Bede and so many others devoted themselves to study and reading.

He who neglects study is like a soldier without armor, a horse without reins, a boat without oars, a writer without a pen, a bird without wings, a blind man without a guide.

Seek also for thine own sake, my son, the wisdom of the saints, the knowledge of salvation; seek that perfection that is so necessary to thy calling. This thou shalt find in the daily reading of pious books.

There thy soul shall be nourished, and shall find from day to day fresh incentives to spiritual progress.

Do not read a great deal hastily, but a little with attention.

Store up in thy heart the pith of the subject, that thou mayst recur to it and, again meditating upon it, purify what is sordid in thee and still further adorn what is beautiful.

If thou wishest to make progress, my

son, to acquire virtue and piety, read the lives of the Fathers and of holy bishops and priests. Considering well their example and the end of their conversation, thou shalt imitate their faith. Oh, how great is the power of example! Much greater, indeed, than that of precept.

Thou wilt wonder and exclaim: They were men like me, frail as I am; behold, nevertheless, how they are numbered among the sons of God and their lot is among his saints. What this one and that one has done why cannot I?

Come, my soul, and let us walk with them in the footsteps of the Lord, let us ascend with them to the home of the God of Jacob.

Sacred study, my son, will be a light to thy mind, a spur to thy will, a guide to thy conduct.

It will console thee when thou art sad, it will encourage thee when thou art wavering, it will strengthen thee when thou art weak, it will calm thee when thou art troubled.

Enter, therefore, into thy room, and free from the noise of the world, devote thyself to reading and study.

This doing, thy room shall become daily sweeter to thee and thy books shall be as dear friends and most welcome consolers.

CHAPTER XLII

THE READING OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURE

DOST thou wish, my son, to learn wisdom and science? Dost thou wish to acquire judgment, justice and the knowledge of doctrine?

Incline thy heart to study Scripture, delve for it more than for a treasure, seek it before wealth.

Soon thou shalt abound and shalt see that the knowledge of Scripture is above the acquisition of silver and gold, that it is more precious than all riches and that nothing that may be desired can compare to it.

Listen, my son, to the secrets of its words, incline thine ear to its eloquence, and let it not escape from thine eyes.

Say to Sacred Scripture: thou art my sister. Call her thy friend.

I am thy Father and thou art my son, and if thou art a good son and I am a beloved Father to thee, thou wilt assuredly seek my company and give ear to my conversation.

Come, therefore, into the solitude of the Scriptures. There I will speak; there I converse with men, not in that terrifying manner in which I gave my commandments to the Jews on Sinai, but with that meekness with which in the person of my Son I gathered the little ones around me.

Approach me, therefore, like one of these little ones. If thou shalt not behold my face, thou shalt at least hear my counsels.

I am thy Lord, and thou art my servant. In the Scriptures I have chiselled the commandments that I have given to thee.

And I have commanded thee that thou shouldst meditate upon them, sitting in thy house, walking abroad, sleeping and rising.

Keep the law, my son; read what is written, for it was written for thine instruction.

I am King of the whole world and thou art my minister, set apart precisely for this that the words, which I have given to thee in the Scriptures, thou

shouldst make known to men; that the commandments, which I have delivered to thee, thou shouldst teach them to observe; that thou shouldst judge them according to my laws.

Therefore it is thy duty, my son, to know my Scriptures. They are the wealth of thy speech, the gold and silver of thy calling.

Read them, my son, and thou shalt not sin, and shalt restrain thy feet from every evil way; for they shall cause thee to remember thy last end.

Read them and thou shalt run in the way of my commandments; for they shall be a lamp to thy feet and a light to thy paths.

Read them and thy soul shall be ever in thy hands; for thou shalt not forget my law.

Read them, and it shall be well with thee; for my testimony shall be the joy of thy heart.

Read them, and they will move thee to fulfill thy ministry with all piety, on account of the eternal reward which they promise thee.

Read them, and in thy sermons thy words shall be sweeter than honey; thy voice uttering my speech in power and magnificence shall break the cedars of vice, shall shake the desert and make to tremble the souls of the wicked.

But faithful souls thou shalt sanctify more and more and lead to higher perfection.

Read the Scripture, and in thy judgments thou shalt not decline from mine, for my law shall be ever before thine eyes.

But if thou dost not devote thyself to the study of Sacred Scripture, how miserable, indeed, shalt thou remain, my son, how poor and blind!

Wretched indeed, for since through thy sacred ministry thou must wage war against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places, thou shalt not have the armor of God to resist.

Nor shalt thou have thy loins girt about with my truth, nor the breastplate of justice, nor feet well shod, nor the

shield of faith to extinguish the darts of the most wicked one, nor the helmet of salvation, nor the sword of the spirit.

Poor indeed shalt thou be; for since thou must break bread to others thou hast not sufficient for thyself.

Lastly, blind shalt thou remain; for my Scripture is the light of men and without it every priest sits in darkness.

And when he preaches he but beats the air or relates fables or belches forth words of human wisdom that avail nothing to salvation.

When he judges in the tribunal of penance, he judges without judgment or equity; blind he essays to lead the blind and falls with him into the ditch.

I know, O Lord, that unless thy law be my meditation, I shall perish in mine abjection. I know that without the assiduous study of it, I can be neither pious, nor wise nor sufficiently instructed.

Therefore I shall search thy wonderful testimonies; I shall search them daily and attentively.

Daily I shall approach to this refresh-

ment of my mind, that I may feed upon thy words.

There I shall seek truth not eloquence, what is useful not what is subtle.

I shall read religiously and humbly, with simplicity and faith.

Grant to me, O Lord, understanding that I may comprehend thy word; let the light of thy countenance shine upon me, and let thyself teach me thy justifications.

I know indeed that thy book speaks beautifully, but if thou art silent it will neither enlighten the mind nor inflame the heart.

CHAPTER XLIII

BAD AND FORBIDDEN BOOKS

BEAR not, my son, the yoke with unbelievers. What participation hath that justice for which thou art striving with the iniquity that the books of wicked men distill?

What fellowship hath the light with which thou hast been enlightened and with which thou must enlighten others, with the darkness of pseudo-philosophers?

What concord hath my minister with the angels of Belial? What part hath the faithful priest with infidel writers?

What agreement hath the priest who daily becomes the temple of his God, with the foul idols that are praised and worshipped in lascivious books?

Go out from them therefore, my son, keep away from evil books and touch not the unclean thing. Remember, my son, that the serpent is the most subtle of all animals. He will not fear to approach even my priests, as of old he drew nigh to Eve.

He comes that he may deceive them as he deceived her, and lead them into sin; yea more, drag them down, if he can, into impiety and unbelief.

Why, says he, hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree? Why shall you not read from every book?

If, by chance, they should reply: God has commanded us not to touch evil books lest we die the death, straightway the enemy will reply: No you shall not die the death, but your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods knowing good and evil.

You know the dogmas of the Church; you are firm in the faith; you are richly endowed with reason, judgment and prudence; you know how to refuse evil and to choose the good.

Read, for it is well for you to be acquainted with the sins and the evils that you must repress.

These evil books, it is true, give expression to some false principles, but the matter is clothed in rich and eloquent diction, and they will teach you

many things of which you are ignorant.

The false doctrines you can reject; the useful art of good speaking and the facts which are worth knowing you will retain.

Thus it happens that some, moved by pride and curiosity, rashly open those books in defiance of the commandment of God and the Church.

And when they have seen that they are fair to the eyes and delightful to behold, they eat of their fruits.

What then? Alas! the poison, spreading like a cancer, soon reaches the heart of the readers.

Soon these fables of wicked men please them more than does the immaculate law of God.

Soon they have not the same detestation, as formerly, of their wicked doctrines.

Soon they are led astray and begin to waver in the faith.

Soon they cease to bring every understanding into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and allow their blind reason to dominate their faith.

At last their faith dies and is removed from their hearts.

O my son, how many priests who were once steadfast and virtuous have thus fallen away, because, vainly trusting in their shield and sword, they have rashly approached the books of the enemies of God!

Therefore I say to thee, dearly beloved, hold bad books in the greatest abhorrence and sit not down with them.

They will appear to thee in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

Seek not in them the profane novelties of the writers nor the theories of so-called science, seeing that many who have sought these things in them, have made shipwreck of the faith.

No matter who he may be that will offer thee a bad book and persuade thee to read it without the permission of thy bishop, say to him: It is not lawful. Say anathema to such a book.

And if unwarily thou hast had anything of this kind in thy possession, cast it from thee without delay and burn it.

Remember that thou carriest the treasure of faith in a fragile vase.

Do not expose it to danger, knowing that its preservation, even though thou be a priest, does not depend upon thy virtue but upon my grace.

Then again, my son, thou knowest that faith without good works is dead.

What shall it profit thee, therefore, to have preserved the faith if thou hast not accomplished the task, that is if thou hast not preserved thy morals incorrupt?

Therefore thou shouldst be no less upon thy guard against books that destroy morals than against those that ruin faith.

See, my son, how the devil tries to deceive thee by a thousand wiles. Since he knows from experience that priests, as a rule, abhor impious books, he craftily strives to undermine their sanctity by lascivious ones.

That most wicked one will approach you in this alluring manner. Friend, says he, a man cannot devote himself always to hard study, he cannot always be engaged in serious reading.

He has need of recreation and change; the bow that is always bent is easily broken.

He will at first offer you books, harmless indeed but frivolous.

Take up and read, says he. You will not find even the shadow of evil in these volumes. These and these read them; and you know that they are holy men.

It is indeed true, my son, that the enemy does not here propose to thee something bad and unlawful; but Satan has another purpose in view.

And what is it? It is that he may induce thee to look upon vanities, and then turn thine affections toward them.

If therefore thou succumbest to his temptation, thou wilt read these books not for the sake of a little recreation but because thou hast become enamored of them. As soon as he observes in thee a liking for this frivolous literature, he will offer thee not merely harmless volumes, but dangerous, impure and lascivious ones.

There are few books, says he, written for recreation that are absolutely pure.

Here and there some passages might well be altered, but many read them with impunity.

Thou hast long preserved chastity. If you meet with something salacious skip it or merely glance over it cursorily. Do not be timid and scrupulous.

But if thou, my son, yielding to the tempter and trusting in thy past chastity, presumest to read such books, thou wilt soon find that as a man cannot carry fire in his breast without scorching his clothing, nor walk upon live coals without burning his feet, so neither can a man read books interspersed with love scenes, and keep his purity long unsullied. Touch not therefore this pitch lest thou be defiled.

Remember that the eyes that are accustomed to look upon the body of the Lord should be absolutely pure.

Such, my son, is the danger of lascivious books, that while bishops may grant to wise and learned priests permission to read heretical or impious ones, they may not do likewise in the matter of books that are immoral.

Thou knowest, dearly beloved, that, as a good priest and a faithful dispenser of the truth, thou dost often thunder in the pulpit against those who read or retain in their possession this kind of literature.

And why? Because thou knowest that impure speech corrupts good morals, that the spirit is prone to evil and that the flesh is weak.

Hast thou, priest though thou art, divested thyself of human spirit and human flesh? Assuredly not.

Thou must indeed be more chaste than the laity, more holy and more perfect. But thou art a man, and of thyself thou art certainly not stronger, more steadfast or less inclined to evil than others.

What, therefore, shall I say to thee? Listen, my son. The greater thou art, the more chaste and holy thou shouldst be: be all the more watchful to keep away from every book that has about it the appearance of evil.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE DIVINE OFFICE

O PRIEST of the Lord, bless the Lord; O servant of the Lord, bless the Lord. Pray in spirit and in mind; sing in spirit and in mind.

Beware lest, whilst thou honorest me with thy lips, thy heart may be far from me.

Holy, holy, holy am I, the Lord God of Sabaoth; the heavens and the earth are filled with my glory. Hosanna in the highest; the angels cry out to me. Hosanna on earth, thou sayest to me, my son. Oh, how great, how holy, how divine is thine office.

Pay what thou owest; let not the slightest particle of this debt overpass thee. Pay it as thou ought; at the proper time, rightly, attentively and devoutly pay the holy debt. Beware of doing so in a hurried and perfunctory manner.

The spirit indeed is willing, my son, but the flesh is weak. Therefore before prayer prepare the soul and be not as a man who tempts God.

Put a bridle upon thine imagination which is accustomed to wander at large.

Raise thy heart from earthly to heavenly things, yea to me myself. See the violinists. Before they begin to play, they tune their instruments; otherwise they would give forth nothing but a confused and harsh sound.

Thus compose thy mind. Put away all vain and worldly thoughts till thou hast accomplished the work of God.

Say to thine affections: Come, let us praise the Lord with joy; let us joyfully sing to God, our Saviour; come let us adore.

Look upon me present with thee and under thine eyes, that penetrate the innermost depths of thy heart, fulfill thy task.

Remember that I am a jealous Lord, cursing him who does my work negligently.

See with what reverence ministers of state treat with their kings.

And I, my son, am the King of kings, the Lord of lords; and when thou fulfillest the obligation of reciting the divine office as my minister and the mediator

of men, thou treatest with me of the most important of all affairs, of the remission of sins, of the sanctification of souls, of grace, salvation and eternal glory.

And thou darest in so great and holy a work to turn thy mind to other things; while the angels praise, the dominations adore and the powers tremble, thou darest to present so important a case in hurrying words and with wandering gaze.

Fear my justice, my son; dread my anger. A prince is not slighted with impunity, much less God.

I know indeed that like a leaf, which is carried away by the wind, the mind of man is easily turned aside from its occupation and wanders distracted unless it be carefully recalled.

Wherefore, my son, thou must watch in prayer and from time to time renew thy devotion.

Attend as much as possible to the sense of the words that thou mayst taste their sweetness.

Pronounce the Gloria to the Trinity at the end of the psalms with all the affection of thy soul; thus the wandering

attention will be recalled and the soul renewed and inflamed.

Remember that thou art performing the work of angels. Picture thyself standing with them at the foot of my throne, and with them adore, praise, bless and love.

Picture thyself praying with me in the Garden of Olives, hearken to my words: Couldst thou not, my son, watch one hour with me? Watch and pray.

O Lord, since I cannot say *Lord Jesus* but by the Holy Ghost, how can I pray without thy grace?

Teach me, therefore, to pray; let thee thyself open my lips, and my mouth shall announce thy praise.

Send forth thy Spirit, the Spirit of prayer and supplication that I may not become in thy sight as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Lord, thou wishest and commandest that my soul should praise thee, and sing to thee all the days of my life. Give to me what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt.

CHAPTER XLV

PUBLIC CEREMONIES

MY son, show reverence for my sanctuary. The people will be edified thereby and will follow thy example.

It is my sanctuary, not thine. Thou dost indeed preside there in a visible manner, but I in reality.

There thou art a priest and a pastor over the people, but nevertheless in my sight thou art but dust and ashes.

Thou hast the right to enter and ascend the altar, but nevertheless thou art unworthy of so great an edifice, and perhaps less worthy than thy flock.

Terrible is this place, my son. It is the house of God and the gate of heaven. Enter it therefore with fear and trembling.

Behold what manner of charity I have bestowed upon thee that thou shouldst be called and art my priest.

Grand and sublime is thy dignity, my son; nevertheless it will not sanctify thee, but thou shouldst sanctify it.

Honor, therefore, thy ministry. Perform faithfully the sacred rites as I have commanded thee. Let not one jot nor one tittle pass from the law till all be fulfilled.

When thou sayest Mass, givest benediction or administerest the sacraments, let the people see and admire thy respect and veneration for my worship and their piety will be increased.

Let there be nothing in thy movements, attitude or voice save what is redolent of modesty, gravity, humility, dignity and piety.

Let the abundance of the holiness of thy soul govern thy whole exterior deportment.

Oh, if thou hadst the sanctity of John the Baptist! Oh, if the people saw thy countenance like that of an angel as of old they beheld in St. Stephen! With what zeal would they venerate and participate in my mysteries!

But ye wicked priests, who despise my table and my sanctuary, who with your arrogant looks, wandering eyes, proud stride, undue haste and disregard of

rubrics scandalize my people, how long will you dishonor me?

How long will you trample under foot the faith and piety of my people? How long will my flock cry out in indignation: Where is their God?

Can we believe that he will come down upon their altar? Will he not destroy those who have violated his sanctuary?

O Lord, my Protector, cast down those wicked ones. Let there come upon them the malediction that of old fell upon Nadab and Abiu.

Let fire come forth from thy tabernacle and devour them and let them expire before thy face. They have taken away faith while living, let them restore it by dying.

But no, Lord, be not angry with them, I beseech thee, nor chastise them in thy wrath.

Let them hear thy merciful voice from heaven: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And at last these transgressors may return to the heart.

CHAPTER XLVI

CARE OF THE CHURCH AND THE ALTAR

THE zeal of my Father's house has eaten me up, because I love it; and if thou lovest me, my son, thou wilt love the beauty of my house.

See what care men who are lovers of themselves, take of their homes, their tables and their garments.

See what splendor and magnificence there is in their houses, what elegance and lavish display at their festive boards, what richness in their apparel.

See how mothers provide for their children that everything about them may be clean and shining.

And wilt thou, my son, permit that the home of thy Beloved should be like a den of thieves, dirty, neglected, falling into ruin, with the statues mutilated and the sacred pictures torn?

Wilt thou suffer my tabernacle, the bridal chamber of the Spouse of thy soul, the throne of thy King, the altar

on which the innocent Lamb is daily immolated for thee to be filthy and unkept?

Wilt thou allow the sacred vessels to become dusty, dirty and corroded?

Let those blush and be confounded who through carelessness permit such a condition to exist.

O incredulous generation! How long shall I dwell with you! How long shall I bear with you!

I am God and there is no other God but me. In my charity I have come down to men, that I might converse and dwell with them, that I might heal them, aid them, and bestow most liberally my gifts upon them. But they have despised me; I have been made a beggar and a pauper in their sight.

Judge, my son, between me and them. What is there that I ought to have done for them that I have not done? What is there that I ought to do for them that I will not do? But they have forgotten me, they know me not, they spurn me.

These men of one mind, my guides and my familiars, who did take sweet-

meats together with me! Yes, be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates thereof be very desolate, since I have become in their sight a worm and not a man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people!

My priests have not cared for the Sacred Hosts and they have become corrupted.

See, my son, if there be disgrace like to my disgrace. Thus have I suffered in the home of those whom I have loved.

O my son, I hope for better things from thee. Thou shalt be more faithful, more reverent and more grateful towards me.

Thou wilt examine my house and attend to having it cleaned and repaired. Thou wilt provide for its suitable decoration as far as thy means will permit. Thou wilt look carefully to mine altar to see that the linens are clean, that the vestments are becoming and in good repair, and that the furnishings are dusted and polished.

Thou wilt give special attention to the sacred vessels, to see that they are puri-

fied, properly covered and carefully put away.

Thou wilt frequently renew the Sacred Species, and preserve them with becoming reverence.

Have confidence, my son, thou shalt be inflamed with the zeal of my house. If thou canst not bestow grandeur and wealth upon my temple, thou canst at least provide for its cleanliness and neatness.

CHAPTER XLVII

ZEAL FOR SOULS

I THY Lord, am a zealous lover of souls. The work of my hands is souls, created to mine image and likeness.

I have loved them with an everlasting love, and, that I might draw them to myself, I have in my mercy sent my Son into the world.

I have willed that he, my only begotten, should be called Jesus, which means "Saviour of the world."

I have willed that he should blot out the handwriting of the decree which was against souls, fastening it to the cross.

I have willed that by his own blood he should reconcile souls to me.

Think, my son, think how precious in my sight are the souls of men.

For them I have not spared even mine own Son but have delivered him up for their sake.

Such am I, such is my Son, O my

beloved! As I love souls so does he love them; as I covet them so does he covet them.

Hear him crying out in the fervor of his heart: I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly. How am I straightened until it be accomplished!

Come all to me and I will refresh you. Come, ye blind, that ye may see; come, ye lame, that ye may walk aright.

Arise, ye dead; awake, ye who sleep in the tomb of sin; arise from your graves and come to me.

O lost drachmas! when shall I find you? O wandering sheep, when shall I lay hold of you?

Come: I am the Good Shepherd. Come, ye unfaithful ones, and I will receive you, embrace you and carry you upon my shoulders.

O beloved souls seeking whom I have sat down weary by the wayside, to redeem whom I have suffered the agony of crucifixion! I go to him who sent me, but I will not leave you orphans.

Go to them, my apostles. As the

Father has sent me, so send I you. Go teach all, cure, heal, sanctify all.

Peter, lovest thou me? Feed souls, feed my sheep.

I go to prepare a place for them. I desire that they should possess with me the kingdom of heaven, that they may rejoice there with me and that no man should take their joy from them.

Such is my Son, such is the Holy Spirit. My Son loves souls and he laid down his life for them. The Holy Ghost loves them and for their sanctification he gave himself to the apostles and bestowed upon them his gifts.

Yes, for the sake of souls, he gave them the gift of tongues, the power to interpret speeches, to work miracles, and to heal the sick.

For their sake the Holy Spirit never ceases and never will cease to govern and direct our holy mother the Church, to inflame with charity the hearts of her ministers, to open their lips and to descend upon them at the imposition of hands.

For their sake the Holy Spirit per-

petually intercedes with unspeakable groanings.

For the sake of souls, he enlightens the minds of sinners and afflicts their consciences with remorse, stimulates the indolent and aids the faithful with graces.

Thus does the Holy Spirit give himself unreservedly to the service of souls.

Thus thou seest, my son, that the will of God is the sanctification of souls.

Therefore, if thou art his minister and helper, thou ought, as far as in thee lies, devote thyself to this one work, the salvation of souls.

Verily, the most divine of all divine works is to cooperate with God in the salvation of souls.

Give him, therefore, souls, and the rest take to thyself. Give him souls that thou mayst inebriate with gladness the heart of thy God, give joy to his angels, become worthy thyself of double honor, save thine own soul and shine as a star for all eternity.

Lovest thou me, my son? Show me thy love by thy works.

He who shows mercy to the poor shows mercy to me; he who gives to the poor gives to me. He who does good to the least of mine hath done it unto me.

What a great favor, therefore, shalt thou bestow upon me if thou procurest the salvation of the souls that I have redeemed!

The salvation of souls is surely much more than food given to the poor.

See what a rich treasure of merit thou shalt lay up for thyself in heaven if thou devotest thyself to the salvation of souls.

He who gives but a glass of cold water in my name shall not lose his reward. What therefore shall be his recompense who gives me souls!

He who scandalizes his brother becomes guilty of his fault. And thou, if thou shalt save men, shalt become a participator in their conversion, their sanctity and all their good works.

Preach therefore the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine that thou mayst save souls; and I will place thee above all my works.

Oh, if thou couldst save but a single soul, oughtst thou not deliver thyself up for it even as I have delivered myself up for thee?

With how much greater zeal, therefore, shouldst thou be inflamed for their salvation, since it is possible for thee to save many?

O my son, wilt thou deliberately suffer thy brother, for whom I have died, to perish?

The devil does not sleep, but ever goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may snatch, kill, destroy and devour. And shalt thou in the meantime be silent, fold thy hands, and doze off to sleep?

O son! O priest! Remember thy last end; think of the awful hour of judgment in which thou shalt render to me an account of thy stewardship.

What joy shall it be for thee if a multitude of souls sanctified by thy ministry shall in glory draw near to me to drink forever of the torrent of my delights!

Oh, happy shalt thou be then, as thou too sittest in judgment upon a throne!

But, oh, what grief will be thine if

thou seest a multitude of souls damned through thy fault and cast into the burning pit where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Oh, how wretched and abandoned shalt thou be then! The blood of the sheep that I have committed to thy care shall cry out to me, and I will demand their blood at thy hand.

CHAPTER XLVIII

PASTORAL VIGILANCE

MY son, I am the good Pastor, and know my sheep. If thou wishest to follow me, diligently study the countenance of thy flock. So watch as not to be ignorant of what transpires by day or night in their midst.

If thou art not vigilant, thou shalt be in my sight as the fleeing mercenary whose own the sheep are not; and the wolf will come and snatch and scatter the sheep.

And when they shall have been scattered, thou wilt be unaware of it and wilt not strive to find them; and thus they will become the prey of all the wild beasts of the forest.

At last their blood will cry to me from the earth saying: Woe to our pastor, who feeds himself and does not feed us. A wild animal has devoured us, and he did not care.

Avenge, O Lord, our blood; let him

render an account for our souls because he has neglected to watch over us.

Watch therefore, my son. But how shouldst thou watch? Take for thy model an excellent mother or a faithful shepherd of his flock.

The good mother labors and takes her rest in the midst of her children that they may be ever under her eyes, so that at the slightest sign of distress she may come to their aid.

The good shepherd counts his sheep as they enter the fold, securely bars the door, returns to them at break of day and follows them to the pasture.

The good mother watches over the actions, the language, the needs, the health, the spiritual exercises of her children, and all their budding traits of character that she may provide for them, correct them, assist and guide them along the path of virtue.

The good shepherd carefully observes what sheep are pasturing and what ones are not, those that are healthy and those that are sickly, those that are fat and those that are lean. those that are quiet

and those that are prone to stray away that in each case he may provide for their needs.

Surely, my son, thou oughtst to love my sheep more than a mother does her children or a shepherd his flock.

Thou shouldst love them for my sake, and love them all the more because I would not have committed them to thy care had I not trusted in thy protestations of more than ordinary love for me.

Verily, my son, if I had not supposed that I was loved by thee, I would not have said to thee: Feed my sheep.

Therefore watch at least as faithfully as did that mother or that shepherd. Be ever in the midst of thy people, unless necessity demand thine absence.

Become so acquainted with thy flock that thou canst call each one by name. So keep thine eyes and thine ears alert that thou mayst immediately observe whatever happens, and thus learn the character of each one.

Watch so zealously over thy flock that thou mayst ever know how it fares with each member, whether he needs advice

or help, praise or blame, encouragement or correction.

Thus thou shalt know what ones are pious that thou mayst perfect and sanctify them more and more; what ones are careless and sinful that thou mayst reprove them and induce them to do penance.

Thus by thy vigilance thou shalt be able to cure all their ills, to procure for them the greatest blessings, and be all things to all of them as becomes the minister of God.

But without vigilance, no matter how pious and learned thou mayst be, what will it profit thy flock?

What shalt thou accomplish by laboring and teaching?

Thou shalt be, my son, as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal playing upon the ears but accomplishing nothing.

Thou wilt be preaching dogmatic sermons when thou shouldst be giving moral exhortations, and thou wilt be treating of morality when thou shouldst be giving instruction in doctrine.

Thou wilt suggest and provide reme-

dies for evils which are not, and evils which are spread abroad thou wilt permit to increase and multiply.

Thou shalt be like a learned, indeed, but foolish doctor who, without looking at the sick person, prescribes for his healthy stomach when he should attend to his diseased lungs.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE TEACHING OF CATECHISM

BREAK bread, my son, for the little ones. They are dearly beloved by me above all others. Bring them to me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

From children well reared and well trained comes a strong and virtuous people; from children well instructed and God-fearing springs the society of the faithful and the assembly of the saints.

As the harvest depends upon the seed, so does the sanctification of man depend upon his early training.

Sow, my son, that thou mayst reap; cast the seed of piety and holy fear into the hearts of children, water it frequently with the dew of exhortation; sprouting forth it will grow and bring forth fruit in due season.

The hearts of children are as impressionable as wax; they readily assume whatever form thou wishest to impress

upon them. Stamp therefore upon them the image of holiness, and it will remain.

Be not ashamed, my son, to be as a child in their midst; for I was not ashamed to be as a man among men that I might redeem thee.

Paul was not ashamed to become weak to the weak; he made himself all things to all men that he might bring salvation to all.

Thus, however eminent for learning thou mayst be, do not disdain to accommodate thyself to the capacity of the little ones, that thou mayst inspire them with a spirit of piety and furnish milk to those not capable of taking solid food that they may grow in sanctity.

O most loving Jesus! who would be ashamed to be humble in the sight of children, since thou who art God dost meekly hold out thine arms to embrace them?

Give me some one who is spiritual, who seeks not what is his own but what is thine, who abounds in charity, humility and piety; he will understand how good and pleasant it is, how necessary and

glorious it is to spend himself in the holy education of youth.

The soul of the proud man, it is true, despises this task, but it is a sweet burden to holy priests. It is indeed a paramount and difficult task, yea, the very power of God.

What indeed is greater than to enlighten souls, to sanctify, to perfect and save them? And when dost thou do more for the illumination, the sanctification, the perfecting and the saving of souls than when thou instructest children in their religion?

Often perhaps thou hast thundered forth from the holy pulpit; and how many hast thou converted? Thou hast officiated with greater solemnity than when thou didst instruct the little ones; but what was the fruit? The seed fell upon the rock and, having sprung up, it withered away because it had no moisture.

Sow, my son, in the good ground, in the hearts that are yet innocent. Thy simplicity will indeed be derided by the worldly-wise, but the seed will spring up

and bring forth fruit a hundredfold, and what thou hast sown in humility thou shalt reap in exaltation.

Instruct, therefore, the children and instruct them frequently. Do not discourse about lofty things nor about many things, but repeat and emphasize in a manner suited to their capacity, a few simple truths.

Be not too stern with them but kind and affectionate, lest they become stubborn and disobedient; be not too familiar but paternal, indulging in no levity, but deporting thyself in a pious and dignified manner.

Be not satisfied with merely explaining the doctrines and precepts, but suggest to the children examples and motives.

They will venerate thee, they will fear thee, they will love thee, they will be glad to listen to thee. Thus thy words as arrows dipped in oil will become fixed in their hearts and ever remain there.

Give not thy whole attention to instruction alone. Of what value is knowledge

without virtue? Watch carefully, therefore, over their conduct.

Frequently during the year gather thy little flock about thee and scrutinize carefully each countenance.

Hear the confessions of the little ones; question them. Often thou wilt find that evil manifests itself at a very early age.

Exercise at once thy restraining influence and the wicked impulse will be curbed, and the serpent while yet little will be crushed. Thou shalt root out the vices, plant piety, water it with prayer, and it will grow.

If thou dost not give assiduous attention to the hearing of the children's confessions, thorns will spring up, flourish and smother every good seed; and thus in the time of the harvest there will be found only cockle to be gathered into bundles to be burned.

CHAPTER L

THE INSTRUCTING OF THE POOR AND THE IGNORANT

WITH me, my son, there is no respect of persons; all souls are mine, redeemed by my blood.

There is neither rich nor poor in my sight, there is for each the same eternity, the same glory if they are saved, the same damnation if they perish.

They have the same Father in heaven, the same Church for a mother on earth, the same spiritual food in the sacraments.

Yea more, my Father has sent me to preach the gospel to the poor; and thou, my son, hast the same mission; see therefore that thou fulfillest that mission.

Thou dost preach and catechize, but is it not true that there are many who are outside the pale of thine efforts?

Are there not many of the flock who, deprived of instruction, are sunk in the vices begotten of squalid poverty?

Are there not many who, over-sensi-

tive about their lack of means or suitable clothes, are ashamed to come to church or to be present at instructions?

Are there not many who, on account of their dwelling far from the church, and the necessity of looking after their stock, are not able to assist at Mass, and, thus wholly deprived of culture and religion, remain enveloped in the darkness of ignorance?

Pastor, what about these sheep? I preach, sayest thou, I teach and instruct; let them come and hear. O my son, that is not sufficient. I did not command my apostles merely to teach, but to go and teach.

But I say to thee, my son, go out into the highways and the hedges, seek the feeble, the blind, and the lame, and invite them, yea, compel them, to enter that my heavenly house may be filled.

But I have admonished them, sayst thou, to come and hear. My son, is it sufficient for a pastor to call after the sheep that have gone astray? No, indeed; he runs after them until he finds them.

I, the Good Shepherd, while I was in the world did not merely wait for such sheep but zealously sought them out in the desert.

Thyself, my son, I did not wait for but sought out and, if I had not first gone after thee and brought thee back, where wouldst thou be?

I sought out the Samaritan woman at the well; there I questioned and instructed her.

See how my apostles travelled through towns and villages, rude settlements and desert places, imparting to all the word of God, the light of grace, and the blessing of peace.

Go, my son, after the scattered sheep that they may hear thy voice.

Visit them as did I, the Orient from on high, that I might enlighten those who were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Gather them together that thou mayst give them special food in an opportune time.

If thy flock be so large that thou canst not thyself bring to each one of thy sheep the aid of holy doctrine, see to it

that they are instructed by wise and prudent teachers.

But do thou thyself direct and watch over this work, frequently demand reports, and do not rest until thou art assured that all are walking in light and holiness, that they are devout and instructed.

A formidable task, sayst thou, perhaps. Cease to complain, my son. What are thy labors compared with what I and my saints have wrought for the salvation of souls?

CHAPTER LI

THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

WOE to thee, my son, if thou dost not announce the gospel. Do not weary of preaching; raise thy voice like a trumpet and declare to my people their crimes and their sins.

Call them to repentance; teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded them.

If thou preachest not and they perish I will demand their blood of thy hand; but if thou dost preach and they hearken not, thou wilt have saved thine own soul.

Speak, speak of my testimonies before the kings of the people and be not ashamed; it is not thou who speakest but the Spirit of my Father who speakest in thee.

Thou hast heard the command, my son; woe to thee if thou dost not obey! I shall consign thee to eternal torment when I shall come to judge the world.

Thou hast heard what manner of ministry has been committed to thee; how sublime it is. Thou hast been appointed

God's coadjutor; thou dost act as ambassador for him, God as it were exhorting through thee. Through thee, as through an aqueduct, he sends forth his word and distributes his graces and merits.

And wouldst thou be indolent in fulfilling so grave and so glorious a commission! Wouldst thou be silent on Sundays and feast days! Far be it from thee, my son, far be it; preach the gospel and preach it perseveringly.

Not by bread alone doth man live but by every word that proceedeth from my mouth; give therefore to the flock this bread that came down from heaven that they may not die; give it frequently that they may grow and wax strong.

I first began to do and then to teach; thus have I preached, my son. Do therefore first, that, being made the pattern of thy flock, thou mayst feed them from the heart.

Excellent indeed will be that preaching in which thou teachest thy flock more by example than by words. Be imitators of me as I of Christ; so walk as you have our model.

How canst thou commend virtues of which thou thyself art destitute? How canst thou denounce vices if thou livest in sin? Be holy, chaste, sober, just, merciful and devout if thou wishest to make others so.

Let not thy works put to shame thy words lest, when thou hast preached in the church, some one will mutely question: Why does he not practice what he preaches?

Preach not, my son, in the persuasive words of human wisdom but in the power of God. I have not sent thee that people may admire thee but that through thee they may be converted to me.

When I dwelt among men I uttered not speech that pleased the ears but that entered the hearts; deny thyself, my son, and follow me.

Seek my glory; seek the salvation of thy neighbor; let all thy sermons promote these ends; utter no word unintelligible to the ordinary hearer.

Preach that thou mayst be heard and understood, not as giving forth an empty sound. Avoid, therefore, the novelties

of worldly speech and the theories of so-called science.

It is I who teach hands to battle and fingers to war; do not, therefore, presume to fight with the sword of the word unless thou hast learned from me.

Learn through prayer; call upon me and the spirit of wisdom will come to thee; learn through study; search the Scriptures; there thou shalt find arrows.

Let what thou dost announce from the pulpit be from my doctrine; it is not thy thoughts but mine that thou declarest to the people.

Fill, therefore, thy heart with my wisdom, and from the abundance of the heart let the mouth speak.

Learn first before thou teachest; otherwise thou shalt be as a cloud without water, that leavest the fruitful field parched with drought.

When thou art about to enter the pulpit, think to thyself that I am with thee, that I, the Word Eternal, am using thy voice to save souls.

Thus thou shalt be as one with me and shalt speak with my spirit, with my char-

ity and with my power, the things which become sound doctrine.

Do not take vain complacency in thyself if thy words flow smoothly, nor be too much downcast if thy speech falter.

Without my grace thou canst do nothing; attribute, therefore, all thy success to me, and, with humility, impute all thy defects to thyself.

No matter how well thou hast preached, what hast thou accomplished? Thou hast planted; thou hast watered; I alone give the increase. Beseech me, therefore, that I may bring forth fruit from thy labor.

Do not be discouraged, my son, if very little fruit follow from thy preachings; it is care I demand of thee, not the cure.

If men do not receive thy peace, it will return to thee and will not lose its reward.

Do not therefore cease to preach because thou dost not see the fruit; very often the fruit is hidden and does not appear.

If from a hundred sermons thou shouldst win only one soul for me would

that not be much? Dost thou know how much one soul is worth? So much, dearly beloved, that for its salvation I would have shed the last drop of my blood.

Labor unwearyingly, ever confident of gathering more abundant fruit through my grace.

When, after laboring all night, thou hast taken nothing, perhaps on one occasion thou wilt catch a great multitude of fish; therefore let down thy net in my name; preach the word in all patience.

At last when thou hast done all that is commanded thee, say: I am an unprofitable servant; I have done that which I ought to do.

Fear lest perhaps when thou hast preached to others thou thyself shouldst become a castaway.

Many indeed shall come to me saying: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and wrought many wonderful works? and I will profess unto them: I never knew you.

O my son, how many preachers are writhing in hell who had greater fluency

and charm of speech than thou, and who converted many more than thou from sin to a pious and holy life.

Nevertheless they perished wretchedly; and why? Chiefly for this reason, that overflowing with pride and conceit, they did not attribute to God but to themselves the heavenly gifts which they had received.

Wherefore, greedy for human praise and puffed up with vanity, vainglorously striving after positions of honor which they covet, the Lord permits them to be carried away. Hence their eternal ruin.

CHAPTER LII

THE HEARING OF CONFESSIONS

THOU hast received the Holy Ghost, my son, and hast been appointed the judge of my people; thou dost bind and loose, thou remittest sins and thou retainest them.

Behold I have committed to thee my authority; what a power is this, my son, what an honor, but what a responsibility! Verily, one that angelic shoulders might tremble to assume. What an art! Truly, the art of arts.

Thou must cure, not the diseases which kill the body, but those which would cast both soul and body into hell. What knowledge therefore should not the lips of such a physician keep!

Thou must snatch and save not the body from death but the soul from eternal damnation. What prudence and kindness must not such a minister of mercy possess!

Thou must pass judgment not in the matter of the disputes and the legal

rights of men among themselves, but upon the very laws of God as they affect human conduct. How great a sense of justice should not the mind of such an arbiter possess!

Seek knowledge in books through study; but the wisdom of prudence, of mercy and of justice draw down from heaven through prayer.

I am the Father of lights who giveth to all abundantly; ask, therefore, and thou shalt receive.

Do not place in a napkin the talent that I have given thee, as if thou knewest me to be like an austere man; nor do not hesitate for that reason to exercise such a dread ministry.

Having the power to save, it is not lawful for thee to abstain from its exercise.

Do what lieth in thee; study, pray, loose and bind as thou judgest best in my sight; then commit all things to me.

I know those whom I have chosen; not angels but men have I clothed with priestly authority.

This ministry, my son, is indeed labor-

ious; beware lest for this reason thou grow indolent and neglect it.

I was in labors from my youth; it is very little therefore if thou devotest days and months and even years to the work of the salvation of souls, since I shed my blood for them and gave my life for them.

This ministry indeed is not in the beginning one of joy but rather of sorrow; later on, however, its exercise bears abundant fruit of peace in the soul.

There indeed labor is fruitful, there the lost sheep are found and brought back to the fold to the great joy of heaven and to the delight of the angels.

There the impure become chaste, the unjust honest, evil tongues are silenced and enemies are reconciled.

There the ignorant acquire knowledge and the prudent wisdom.

There stains are washed away, wounds are healed, sins remitted, innocence restored to the fallen and beauty to the disfigured soul.

There milk is given to the weak and food to the strong; there the faint of

heart are rendered courageous, and the exuberance of the strong finds exercise; the just are still more justified, and the sanctity of the holy increased.

There is the fountain of gardens, the well of living waters which run with a strong stream from Libanus.

See, my son, what blessings thou canst bestow upon my flock in the tribunal of penance; knowing therefore the good and not doing it, how shalt thou escape from sin?

Call, therefore, sinners to repentance; if thou neglectest to call them and to hear them the wolf will come and scatter the sheep, charity will grow cold and iniquity abound.

There will be no chastity among the youth, no fidelity among the married, no honesty among business men, no trustworthiness in servants, among parents no solicitude for their offspring, among children no obedience to their parents.

In a word, there will be neither piety, faith nor religion in thy flock.

O priest! O thou especially who hast care of souls! Stop and consider what

a multiude of sins thou bringest down upon thy head if thou dost not frequently summon thy flock to the tribunal of penance, if thou neglectest to hear them when they come, or if thou hearest their confession without care, without zeal, and without discernment.

CHAPTER LIII

KINDNESS IN THE CONFESSIONAL

MY son, be merciful as thy heavenly Father is merciful; learn of me for I am meek of heart.

The bruised reed I have not broken; the smoking flax I have not extinguished; and rejoicing, I meekly placed upon my shoulders the sheep that had gone astray.

I praised and forgave the sinner who came to me lamenting her sins, I cast a look of mercy upon the erring Peter, and graciously admitted to paradise the penitent thief.

See how it belongs to me to spare and to show mercy.

As the dispenser of mysteries, see therefore, my son, what kindness thou shouldst show to sinners who approach the tribunal of penance.

Some one comes from a far country; that is to say, for many months and perhaps years he has been forgetful of God his Creator and unmindful of the salvation of his soul; but at last he says within

himself: I will arise and go to my Father.

O my son, receive him joyfully, receive him kindly. Surely, if it is thy duty to zealously seek out the stray sheep, thou shouldst not repulse the one that returns to thee.

Another approaches burdened with crimes, sunk down, as it were, in the lowest dregs of vice, full of ulcers and covered with filth.

O my son, do not show disgust through mistaken zeal, do not scold and upbraid him at the beginning. But, on the contrary, say to him kindly as did I: Come to me, thou who laborest and art burdened, come to me with confidence and I will refresh thee in the Lord.

Take for thy model the father of that prodigal whom I have portrayed for thee.

Behold the picture. He approaches the son whom the father had dearly loved, and who had most ungratefully fled from home;

Who had formerly abounded in good things in his father's house, and who had wasted his substance living riotously;

Who had once been clothed in rich garments and who is now covered with rags. He had been ungrateful, he had been wicked, he had been vicious.

Nevertheless he comes; his father sees him; he goes out to meet him; he falls upon his neck; he embraces him; he bathes him with tears; he raises him up by the hand; he kindly conducts him to his home; he puts on him the first robe; he puts a ring on his finger; he banquets him with the fatted calf and celebrates his return with music.

Remark, my son, that the offended father does not scold nor show any sign of anger or sadness.

What have I wished to teach by this parable? Through it I have said to sinners that they should return to thee without fear as to a father; and to thee that thou shouldst receive them without harshness.

Learn, my son, of whose spirit thou art. I have not sent thee to damn souls, but to win them and to save them.

Wherefore I have appointed thee, a sinner, over them that, knowing the

measure of mercy that I have meted out to thee, thou mayst have pity on them in like manner.

I have commanded thee, it is true, that thou shouldst lift up thy voice like a trumpet to declare to the people their crimes; but where, but when, my son?

Where? In the pulpit where thou teachest, where thou exhortest, where thou strivest to strike fear into the impenitent.

When? When they are stiff-necked, hard of heart, and give no thought to their conversion.

Then say to them with me: Ye brood of vipers! Woe to you, hypocrites! Woe to you who laugh now; Woe to you who travel by the smooth and wide way that leads to perdition!

But in the holy tribunal when they come that they may be healed, say to them, my son, with all kindness: Behold here I am that I may cure you, that I may unburden you, that I may gather you under my wings.

O little children, whom I again bring forth until Christ shall be formed in you,

come to me; a contrite and humble heart our God will never despise.

Come, weep for your sins, and if they be as scarlet they shall be made white as snow, and if they be red as crimson they shall be made white as wool.

But, my son, if thou upbraidest them harshly in the beginning, or even unnecessarily in the course of their confession, what will happen?

The last sheep that is at the very door of the fold will flee away in terror, thinking that he has found a wolf, not a pastor.

Or he will make his confession without confidence, thinking thee to be a tyrant and not a father.

Or he may even conceal the more dangerous and hidden wounds of his soul, imagining he has found in his confessor a torturer, not a physician.

Thus will perish through thy fault thy brother for whom I have died, to whom I have sent thee, whom I have trustfully committed to thy care.

Remember, my son, that thy penitent brother is a man and not an angel, and

that thou art not a minister of vindictive justice, but of justice tempered by mercy.

Take care not to put new wine into old vessels, nor a piece of raw cloth into an old garment; do not lay upon the shoulders of thy penitent heavy and insupportable burdens which with a finger of thine own thou wilt not move.

Nevertheless, my son, compel them to observe all things that I have commanded thee, to cease acting perversely, and to learn to walk in the way of my commandments.

Nor deem it mercy to cast pearls before swine, nor to give the bread of angels to those who delight in husks.

Think it not clemency, my son, to forgive the crimes of those who show no sign of amendment, to remit the sins of those whose contrition thou prudently judgest to be neither sincere nor efficacious. To do so would be to damn souls, not to save them.

Are there not many sick unto death who say to the physician: I am feeling well? And if the physician should believe his statement and say: Very good,

my friend, get up and eat and drink what you will, and the patient dies, wouldst thou praise such a doctor?

Nor wouldst thou call this mercy if another should come to thee confessing that he is covered with the ulcers of sin and habituated to crime, and thou shouldst say: Art thou sorry, my child? and if he replies: I am sorry, thou immediately absolvest him.

Verily, to do so were to damn, not to save souls.

Thou hast shown to a surgeon a festering wound on one of thy limbs; the member should be amputated in order to save thy life.

But he does not dare to propose this to thee, or to say that it is necessary, but merely anoints and binds up the wound.

In a short time putrefaction sets in; the malady is now incurable and thou must die; what dost thou think of such a surgeon?

I trustfully, sayst thou, showed him the wound that he might cure it. If he had said that amputation was necessary

I would have consented, but he did not say so, he did not command it; he is guilty of my death.

Change the name, my son; this surgeon is that priest who does not warn the sinner who is living in the occasion of sin, saying to him: Brother, thy hand scandalizes thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; thine eye scandalizes thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; otherwise thou shalt be cast with them into eternal fire.

That is to say, unless thou avoidest those occasions of sin to which thou art exposed, thou shalt not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come.

Verily, my son, if thou seekest the welfare of the penitent, if thou wishest as thou ought to mercifully save his soul, thou must see to it that his sin be not merely outwardly covered up but, on the contrary, that interiorly it be removed from the soul, and wholly disappear.

But this cannot be unless the penitent is truly sorry, sincerely renounces his crimes, abandons the habit and proximate occasion of sin, restores ill-gotten

goods, becomes reconciled with his enemies, and repairs the injuries that he has done.

Seest thou from this, my son, what sort of kindness is that which altogether blindly bestows the blessing of absolution without rule or without prudence on ill-disposed persons.

O false peace, which leaves war in the heart; O deceptive mercy, which produces sleep and not a cure, death and not life!

O unjust judge, who, for the satisfaction of an evil-desiring man, prostitutes my authority!

Truly, my son, one who knowingly, or even through culpable lack of knowledge, absolves a sinner who is not contrite nor converted from his evil ways, dares to bestow my peace upon my enemy while he still hates me, hands me over to him to be crucified at his hands.

See, my son, how sometimes my house becomes a den of thieves; see how these careless priests fail in their duty.

O modern prelates, who thus through cowardice and culpable weakness hand

me over to whosoever would again crucify me!

O my son, far be such iniquity from thee, such cruel and sinful kindness.

Remember that the power and precept was given to thee not only to loose but also to bind.

Therefore exercise the greatest care, that in thy ministry mercy and truth may meet each other and justice and peace may kiss. Thus shalt thou be a faithful and prudent dispenser of my mysteries.

CHAPTER LIV

ZEAL FOR THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS

I HAVE borne thy sins upon the tree, my son, that being dead to sin, thou mightst live to justice.

I have come, I have labored, I have preached, I have suffered and I have died that the body of sin might be destroyed.

Dost thou wish, my son, to be a pastor according to my heart? Then labor faithfully that iniquity may be wiped out.

Strive with the utmost zeal to bring sinners to the fountain of penance that their sins may be washed away.

Go after them and, like the angels rescuing Lot from Sodom, take by the hand those who are on the way to perdition, and endeavor to bring them back to the path of salvation.

Lovest thou me, my son? Realize then that these by their sins crucify me again daily, heap insults upon me, buffet

me, scourge me with rods and crown me with thorns; and thou lookest on at all this cold and unmoved.

The holy women wept when they saw me, exhausted by my wounds and the weight of the cross, climbing the hill of Calvary; they were broken-hearted at not being able to free me; and thou, my son, who hast the power to save me from new sorrows, dost not do so.

Wilt thou, my chosen friend, not stand between me and sinners who with wicked hands daily strike and scourge me?

Remove as far as in thee lies the abomination of sin; convert sinners, that abandoning their crimes they may spare me.

My friends and acquaintances have withdrawn far from me: abandoning me, they have fled.

Iniquities, robberies, impurities, adulteries, blasphemies, drunkenness, deceits, frauds and calumnies are daily multiplied. Infinite is the number of evils, and my priests are silent.

O my friends, why have you become cruel to me? O priest, embrace discip-

line, lest at any time I be angry and thou perish from the just way.

My sheep have gone astray on the road to hell; they have reached the very brink of the abyss of torments; and those whom I have appointed the guardians of my flock do not cry out, do not run after them, do not rescue them.

They have been scattered under the very eyes of their pastors, and have become the prey of wild beasts.

O unfaithful pastors, I shall condemn you in my wrath, I shall punish you in my anger, I shall consign your bodies to fire and worms that ye may burn and be tormented forever.

My son, if any one has erred from the truth, convert him, save his soul from death.

Beseech him, admonish him, advise him, exhort him, show him every kindness; then make my judgments resound in his ears, show him the devouring fire, the eternal flames, compel him to do penance.

Recall how St. John, the disciple whom I dearly loved, when he was al-

ready advanced in years, braved the arms of assassins and travelled through hills and forests to seek out, to bring back and to convert the young man who had been committed to his care by his bishop, and who had later become a robber chief. Go thou after sinners and do likewise.

CHAPTER LV

PRAYER FOR SINNERS

I HAVE asked my Father and he has given me the nations for mine inheritance. Ask, my son, and he will give you the grace to convert sinners.

To the prayer of Stephen he granted the conversion of Paul, and to the petitions of Monica the conversion of Augustine. Ask and thou shalt receive.

Amen, I say to thee, if thou ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to thee; all things whatsoever thou shalt ask in prayer, believing, thou shalt receive.

Hast thou realized, my son, the power and efficacy of prayer? I, the Lord, have sworn and I will not repent.

If, therefore, there be in the flock committed to thy care erring sheep or others on the verge of ruin whom thou hast been unable to convert by advice, exhortation or threats, have recourse to prayer.

Thou hast set them an example, thou hast preached the gospel to them; there

remains prayer; these three: but the greatest of these is prayer.

Pray therefore that my Father may send the Paraclete, his Holy Spirit, who will speak to their hearts, convert them and break their chains.

What he has granted so often to others through prayer, shall he deny to thine earnest petitions? Pray then for all, but especially for sinners.

I am their advocate with my Father, he will gladly look on the face of his Christ.

My blood shall speak much louder in his sight than the blood of Abel.

Behold, my son, I am in thy hands; offer my body; offer my blood; offer me wholly to my Father in sacrifice with burning love in thy heart for sinners that they may be converted.

Offer the Mass especially for those whom thou knowest to be burdened by the most grievous crimes and enslaved by the most inveterate habits of sin.

I am a propitiation for sins and for sinners; offer therefore the sacrifice of propitiation. Thus ever did my saints,

and hence they converted so many sinners.

There is, moreover, with me in heaven a powerful intercessor, Mary my Mother. Never was it known that anyone who fled to her protection was left unaided.

If, therefore, thou art broken-hearted over the iniquities of the people, call upon Mary; she is the consoler of the afflicted.

If thou desirest special graces in order to convert the wicked, she is the help of Christians and the Mother of divine grace.

If there be sinners who seem to be outside the pale of mercy, call upon Mary; she is the refuge of sinners, the Mother of mercy; place them under her protection.

There is no manner of grace or blessing which she cannot obtain for them, and that thou shouldst not confidently look for through her intercession.

CHAPTER LVI

CARE OF THE SICK

I WAS sick and you visited me not; for this I shall reproach men on the day of judgment; how much more priests!

It is a crime not to furnish the necessary corporal aids to the sick; how much greater the crime not to minister to their spiritual needs.

In sickness the body is in danger, but how much more the soul.

The one indeed shall return to dust, but the other shall pass to judgment and go into the house of its eternity.

It is a terrible thing, my son, to fall into the hands of the living God. With what care therefore oughtest thou prepare souls for judgment.

Oh, if through thy fault sanctifying grace should be withheld from one soul in that last moment, if through thy neglect it should be deprived of absolution, the holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, and thus come before me burdened with sins to be condemned in

judgment, what a crime thou wouldst commit! What an avenging punishment shall await thee! For all eternity that lost soul shall curse thee.

Whenever, therefore, thou learnest that one of thy flock is dangerously ill, hasten to him; and after thou hast shown sympathy for him in his illness and won his heart by kindness, express the willingness to minister to him.

If he be willing, immediately administer the sacraments; if not, and the danger of death is imminent, reprove, rebuke, entreat, persuade. There can never be too great security where the eternal life of the soul is in danger.

Do not depart, therefore, until my grace has conquered.

Then having given thanks to God, hear his confession.

Assist him in this and beware of fatiguing, by a long discourse, his soul already weakened by disease; nevertheless, neglect none of the essentials.

Take care to ascertain if there be any sin concealed in confession which is still burdening his conscience.

Divest him of false shame; sound the wall, and draw therefrom the dead men's bones.

Oh, how many wounds wilt thou often find; how many iniquities which, if not prudently wrenched from them by thee, will be retained by the sick even until death and will sleep with them in the dust.

Oh, what a blessing thou wilt bestow upon the penitent if thou inducest him to disclose this abominable secret! What a consolation thou wilt afford to the sick man!

What an obstacle to his salvation thou wilt remove! Blessed indeed shalt thou be, my son, if thou do this.

Exhort him to confess again the principal sins of his life as far as his condition and the occasion permit.

Impose a light penance suited to the capacity of the sick man, reminding him that if he recovers he should come again to confession and make more adequate satisfaction.

When the confession is over speak to him from the fullness of thy heart, sug-

gest pious ejaculations, excite him to sorrow for his sins, inspire him with love for and confidence in God.

Having administered the last sacraments, do not abandon the sick man who has been refreshed by holy Viaticum and strengthened by Extreme Unction.

Strive to still further justify and sanctify him.

When a person is sick unto death the devil labors all the more, knowing that his time is short.

Wherefore, frequently visit the sick man that thou mayst strengthen him against the attacks of the enemy, confirm him in the grace of God, aid him in his sorrows, console him in his anxieties, and occasionally again absolve him.

Suggest to him acts of holy faith, hope, charity and contrition for his sins, and inspire him with the desire of eternal life. Induce him to be resigned to the will of God, exhort him to be patient, and often present to him the cross of Christ.

Invoke the prayers of the Mother of God and of his saints in his behalf; and

aid him to gain all the holy indulgences which thou hast faculties to apply to his soul.

But, if on account of thy many duties thou canst not call upon the sick man frequently, see that he is visited by some prudent and holy person who will be able to assist him and who will notify thee so that he may not be deprived of thy presence at the moment of his death.

If the sick person be very poor, to thy spiritual aid, add as liberal alms as possible.

O my son, if thou dost this, thou shalt be a man of mercies. I will exalt thee in the Church of my people, for I was sick and thou didst visit me.

CHAPTER LVII

CHARITY TOWARDS ONE'S NEIGHBOR

I AM compassionate and merciful, my son, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy, sweet to all, and my mercies are above all my works.

I have come not to destroy souls but to save them; and to save them I used not the sword but kindness.

My chains were the cords of Adam, the bands of love; my yoke was sweet and my burden light.

Dost thou wish to draw souls to thyself? Dost thou wish to win them to me? Show kindness, enlarge thy charity.

Love is as strong as death; it conquers all things; the rough-mannered it subdues.

Let thy flock see that thou actest in a fatherly manner towards them with the sole desire of saving their souls, and they will voluntarily yield themselves into thy hands.

Oh, if thou couldst but say to them

with the affection of a Paul: God is my witness, how much I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

O my children, my mouth is open to you; my heart is enlarged, you are not straitened in us but in your own bowels you are straitened, (I speak as to my children), be you also enlarged.

My little children, of whom I am in labor again until Christ be formed in you; who is weak and I am not weak? Who is scandalized and I am not on fire?

If thou wert to speak like this from the heart to thy flock, how gladly would they incline the ear and open the heart, receive thine instructions and observe thy commandments! How readily would they follow after me in thy footsteps!

They are truly experienced teachers who know how to exercise the strict discipline of a father and the tender mercy of a mother.

Therefore, my son, show thyself a kind pastor to thy flock, not in word alone but in the sincerity of thy heart and the exercise of thy priestly zeal.

I went about doing good and curing all; follow me, my son.

If thou seest one of thy flock groaning under the weight of poverty and adversity, kindly lighten his burden as far as in thee lies by thy sympathy and pecuniary assistance.

If another be ill and downcast by the weight of his infirmities, cheer him by thy kindly aid, help him with thine advice, and revive his drooping spirits with words of consolation.

If another be bent beneath the burden of sin, like the father of the prodigal, fall upon his neck and kindly welcome back the lost sheep.

If another be prone to discouragement, spur him on with a cheery word.

If another be rebellious and stiff-necked, bear with him patiently and thou, who art the stronger, support his weakness.

Be not discouraged if when thou hast sown good grain thou reapest cockle. I, my son, from the manger even to the cross, have not ceased to labor for the

salvation of souls; nevertheless many are not saved.

Do not hope immediately to extirpate all vices. Too great zeal in rooting out evil rather exasperates people and confirms them in wrong-doing.

There are some vices that must be rather mildly discountenanced than bluntly condemned; others are to be tolerated and, as it were, not seen for the time being.

Some souls are won by pious persuasion rather than by being submitted to the useless humiliation of a severe chastisement.

One of the successors of Peter has rightly said: Holy Mother Church in a spirit of fervor chastises some, while in a spirit of meekness she bears with others and overlooks their faults; thus often she curbs the evil that she deplores by bearing with it and appearing not to see it.

Strive therefore first to win the hearts of thy people by thy kindness, before thou undertakest to correct them.

CHAPTER LVIII

MORAL COURAGE

MY son, thou hast received the Holy Ghost to strengthen thee, be not therefore faint-hearted.

Be strong and do not fear; be brave in conflict and fight manfully.

No matter how weak thou mayst be, remember I have chosen thee that through thee I might confound the strong. No matter how stiff-necked they may be whom thou must war against, remember I have given thee valor beyond their valor.

Even though the whole world should be in arms against thee, do not tremble with sudden fear. I who have overcome the world, as a mighty warrior am with thee.

If thou hast already been called by me to rule souls, if thou hast already been lawfully appointed pastor of my flock, do not forget my commandments, cease not to confide in my promise.

See what vices thou must root up,

what evils thou must avoid, what good works thou must accomplish; and when thou hast prudently considered the means by which thou canst accomplish this, arise and act.

Say boldly even to rulers: It is not lawful. Say to the wicked murderer: Thou art that man. Say to the proud sinner: Woe unto thee, thou shalt die; I shall pass by and thou shalt not be.

Say to those who demand unlawful things of thee: I must obey God rather than man.

Say to those who reject thy warning: Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida! Even the very dust of your city that cleaveth to us, we wipe off against you.

Say to hypocrites: Woe to you, whited walls, the Lord shall strike you.

Say to those who dare to approach my holy table unworthily: Away, ye curs, it is not lawful to give what is holy to dogs.

Send forth thine arrows and thy thunder that thou mayst put to flight all manner of evils.

Condemn the pride of the mighty, war against the avarice of the rich, denounce the corruption of the impure.

Destroy enmities, break up feuds, thunder against sensualities.

Suppress improper dances, banish wicked and immoral books, denounce obscene and blasphemous speech.

You will make enemies indeed by speaking the truth; Satan will stir up persecutions against thee, but thou art not above me, my son, and if they have persecuted me, they will persecute thee.

Thou canst indeed by being silent and by tolerating evil keep thyself free from persecution; in this way it is true thou wouldst please men, but thou wouldst not be the servant of Christ.

Remember that he, whose minister thou art, came not to send peace but the sword.

Sit not down therefore with folded hands. Take the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, and wield it fearlessly.

And if they put thee out of the synagogues, and if the hour comes in which

they shall wish to put thee to death, saying: This man seeks not to make peace but discord among the people; come let us lay hold of him, let us blot out his name from the earth, we shall be doing a service to God if we put him to death.

In the face of all this, my son, stand unafraid; stand before kings and governors; let your fortitude shine forth in chains, in stripes and even in death. Show the world that a true priest may be killed, but he cannot be conquered.

My son, thou canst do all things in me who strengthen thee.

At the voice of a servant maid Peter, left to himself, denied me. Aided by me, Peter manfully suffered death on the cross.

Cease therefore to tremble saying: I am but a man and how can I bear up under all these things?

Know, my son, that in that hour it is not thou who endureth by thine own strength, but my spirit who shall endure in thee.

Say therefore: Yea, Lord, if it be necessary I will give my life for my flock.

I know, my God, that thou commandest not impossibilities, but aideth us to fulfill what thou commandest.

Thou hast promised, O Lord, and thou wilt fulfill, thou wilt come to mine aid, thou wilt hasten to mine assistance.

I know in whom I have believed and I am filled with confidence; yes, I will fulfill my ministry, I will fear no evil because thou art with me.

Such, my son, is the courage of soul that becomes my soldier; courage, courage, put far from thee unpriestly cowardice.

Cease to merely timidly deplore the evils that arise, and to condemn them faint-heartedly saying: It is not right, my brethren, to do these things.

Courage, courage, do not fear lest the report of thy fervent zeal should bring upon thy head the censure and ridicule of easy-going priests! It is not to them but to me that thou must render an account of thy stewardship.

Advance courageously, looking neither to right nor left, nor thinking: What will they say if I denounce this abuse, or if

I undertake this good work? Consider merely what thou oughtest to do, seek prudent advice, and then go ahead.

Nevertheless, remember that thou must be a father not a tyrant, a pastor not a wolf, a physician and not an executioner.

Remember that meekness and kindness must go hand in hand with thy zealous fervor, lest thou kill rather than heal, lest in pulling up the cockle thou root out also the good grain.

Act prudently therefore, my son, but by all means beware the wisdom of the flesh which is the enemy of God.

CHAPTER LIX

PRUDENCE AND SIMPLICITY

BE prudent as a serpent and simple as a dove. Behold, my son, thine arms; with these thou shalt conquer.

Through sanctity thou shalt save thyself; through prudence and simplicity thou shalt sanctify others.

Through prudence zeal becomes a burning fire; without prudence, a destroying conflagration.

Through prudence mildness becomes a healing balm; without it, a destroying poison.

Through prudence the eloquent sermons of the preacher become penetrating arrows; without it they are words flying through the air.

Through prudence thou wilt wisely pay due respect to influential men, and in honoring them thou shalt edify them; without prudence thou shalt cringe before them or offend them, and thus thou wilt make to thyself enemies who may prove very hurtful to thy sacred ministry.

Through prudence thou wilt please all as far as possible; without prudence thou wilt scandalize insignificant people through too much familiarity, or drive sinners from thee by a too austere reserve.

Through prudence thou shalt happily draw from thy penitents the poison of sin and sweetly implant in their souls the seed of virtue; but without prudence thou wilt freeze the hearts and weary the minds of thy penitents.

Through prudence thy flock shall be wisely directed and controlled; but without prudence it shall be scattered and disorganized.

O my son, ask me for prudence; it is more precious than all riches, and all things that are desired are not to be compared to it.

Ask of me that wisdom that minister at my throne and in all things it will direct thee.

Seek it from the wise and purchase it for thyself; frequently ask advice from prudent men and they will tell thee what it behooveth thee to do.

Trust not too much thine own judgment; there is little light in thee, and thou art sometimes moved by passion when thou thinkest it zeal.

Choose rather to be instructed by a conscientious man than to follow thine own opinions.

Be simple in all things; show thyself sincere and straightforward; act without dissimulation; speak without guile.

Believe me, simplicity is more effective than all manner of schemes and diligence.

Call thy flock from thy heart, not from thy lips alone, and they will come at the sound of thy voice.

Reproach sinners in a spirit of sorrow and commiseration, and not from impulse or temper; then they shall weep and be converted.

Encourage the faint-hearted, not as a mother but as an eagle tempting her little ones to fly; then they will make rapid progress.

O blessed simplicity that proceeds from a good and perfect heart and

softens the hearts of all who see and hear, come and reign in all my acts!

Through it I will be pleasing to thee, my God, who lovest the right of heart and who findest thy complacency in the love of a sincere soul.

I shall, moreover, please men to whom, through my simplicity, I shall show the love of a father and the affection of a mother.

CHAPTER LX

GENTLENESS

MY son, exercise thy ministry with gentleness, and thou shalt be exalted above the glory of men. I am the Lamb of God, it is sufficient for the disciple to be like unto his Master.

I sent mine apostles as sheep into the midst of wolves. As I conquered death and hell through the gentleness of a lamb in the shambles, so with lamblike meekness did mine apostles conquer the world.

The mild pastor, I the Lord will direct. To the meek pastor I will teach my ways. As I was with Moses when I sanctified him in his meekness, so I shall be with him. Through him my sheep will hear my voice, and both pastor and flock shall be saved.

Be therefore, my son, a pastor mild and meek. That thy ministry may not be blamed, be kind to all.

In the serenity of thy heart and soul, lovingly welcome the noble and the lowly, the rich and the poor. Give help

and counsel to each, and deal not severely but kindly with the importunate.

I did not repel those who came to me but received them graciously and heaped favors upon them. I welcomed the little ones; I taught the multitude that rudely crowded about me; I consoled the afflicted and the poor; I visited and healed the sick and I did not reject the kiss of the traitor.

Learn therefore of me to put on the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience.

Do not frown more severely than is necessary upon anyone, nor say to him a harsh word. Sadden not the afflicted by a sharp answer. Be not wroth with him who has done thee an injury, nor refuse to forgive thine enemy; overcome evil with good.

Suffer all things, endure all things, injure no man; beware of quarrels and disputes.

Obey thine ecclesiastical superiors faithfully and promptly in all things; banish from thy heart every vestige of the spirit of rebellion or disobedience.

The meek servant of God refuses to oppose authority; as clay in the hands of the potter, he never says: Why do you treat me thus?

Admire and imitate, my son, the gentleness of St. Martin. No one ever saw him angry or sad or indulging in boisterous laughter. He was ever one and the same, a heavenly joy ever suffusing his countenance.

He armed himself with such patience against all injuries that he suffered himself to be injured with impunity even by his subordinate clerics; nor on account of this did he remove them from their positions or exclude them from the exercise of his charity.

Never upon his lips was ought but Christ; never in his heart ought but piety, peace and mercy. He often even shed tears over the sins of those who calumniated him.

See also St. Francis of Sales. He most meekly made himself all things to all men that he might win all. Study his example and imitate him.

Nevertheless do not forget, my son,

that thou art the commander and guide of thy flock. Thou must not only cherish them but rule them, and for that reason sometimes correct and chastise them.

See therefore that thou be not so mild as to let slip from thee the authority necessary to strict discipline; nor on the other hand so strict as to lose all the gentleness of charity.

O Lord, who art goodness and gentleness itself, how beautiful thou art, my Beloved and how fair to behold.

Show to me thy face that I may see the mildness of thy countenance, the sweetness of thine eyes, the meekness of thy lips, the beauty of thy carriage and, above all these, the eminent charity of thy heart.

That I may see thee the Lord of lords, that I may even have thee before my eyes, that, enraptured with thine infinite humility, I may strive to imitate and clothe myself with thy gentleness.

CHAPTER LXI

PATIENCE

IT behooves me, my son, to suffer and thus enter my kingdom; wherefore I was ever prepared for stripes; wherefore I was in labors from my youth; wherefore I was a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity.

Thou also, my son, must enter into my kingdom through many tribulations.

Wherefore I have said to thee: Dost thou wish to come after me? Take up thy cross.

Verily, my son, all depends upon the cross; and if there were something better than to suffer, I surely would have shown it to thee in deed and word.

Therefore patience is necessary to thee, that doing the will of my Father thou mayst obtain the promise.

Therefore thou must in patience run to the fight proposed unto thee.

If thou wert merely a Christian I would say: Take unto thee, my son, the shield of patience and keep it ever with thee.

Truly the life of a Christian, if he lives according to the gospel, is a cross and a martyrdom.

But thou art a priest, the leader of those who must endure this cross and martyrdom. How much more necessary therefore is patience to thee!

Without this, how wilt thou urge on thy flock to suffer patiently and to do violence to themselves? Without it how wilt thou bear up under the labors, the anguish and the contradictions of thy sacred ministry? Without this how shalt thou wage war against the world and the devil? Without this how shalt thou stand against the forces of evil that press in upon thee?

Without this thou shalt not make progress but fall back; thou shalt not conquer but be conquered.

Without patience thy piety will in a short time grow tepid, thy zeal become cold. In the pursuit of good thou shalt be nothing more than a vapor, appearing for a little while and quickly vanishing when it encounters some obstacle.

Without it indeed thou shalt put thy

hand to the plow but shalt look back, and for this reason thou shalt not be fit for the kingdom of God.

But through patience thou shalt become conformable to me who was crucified; through it thou shalt ever remain subject to my will, and thou shalt always do what is pleasing to me.

Through it thou shalt wonderfully expiate thy sins; through it thou shalt be made strong against temptation.

Through it thou shalt become a true minister of mine, better than a strong man and a besieger of cities, unwearied in the tribunal of penance and in the pulpit, unafraid in the midst of dangers and unmoved in the midst of persecutions.

The wicked shall laugh at thee and thou shalt not be confounded; they shall war against thee and thou shalt prevail.

Remember, my son, there is no tribulation that is not from my hand.

Whatever trials assail thee, bear them patiently as if thou sawest my heavenly Father chastizing thee with his own hand.

Thy weak human nature, it is true,

will sometimes sigh; this is natural but it is unlawful to complain.

My son, bear up manfully for a little while, that is to say with perfect resignation and abounding confidence, so that in thy heart thou wilt desire and welcome not more prosperity than adversity, abundance than poverty, health than sickness, peace than persecution; saying at all times: Lord, what dost thou wish me to do?

Well done, good servant! Bear up even yet more manfully; bear up with gladness, counting it all joy when thou shalt fall into divers temptations.

Knowing that trial worketh patience and that patience hath a perfect work; knowing that the more thou shalt suffer, the more securely shalt thou arrive at my kingdom.

Behold, my son, the true way that leads to life, the gate through which one must enter the heavenly city.

A straight way, sayest thou, a narrow gate; a hard saying, but certainly much harder it shall be to hear that last sen-

tence: Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.

A hard saying! O my son, if the labor affrights thee, let the reward invite thee; for that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh an eternal weight of glory.

A hard saying! But, my son, I have first given thee the example. See how in hanging upon the cross I opened not my mouth.

A hard saying! But did not my saints accept it?

Behold the apostles and martyrs, so many holy priests and bishops, see what they have suffered, how strongly they were tempted, how grievously they were afflicted, in how many ways they were tried and tested.

Follow therefore, my son, this so great cloud of witnesses that is placed over thy head, knowing that if thou refusest to suffer with them, thou refusest to be crowned with them.

A hard saying! And how much have men not suffered for the world and its

passing riches, for the momentary applause of the multiude and even for sin itself.

Emulate their example, my son, and blush at being unwilling to suffer to obtain heaven while these have endured so much for the nothingness of vanity.

O Lord, thy will be done! Here burn, here cut; I am ready.

But truly thou knowest that the spirit indeed is ready but the flesh is weak.

If tribulation grows beyond measure, if it long remains, how shall I sustain it?

O my son, am I not thy Father? Am I not faithful? Verily, I will not suffer thee to be tempted above that which thou art able, but will make with temptation issue that thou mayst be able to bear it.

Pray, my son, and endure; without doubt thou shalt see my aid coming to thee in due season.

I know the time and the manner of aiding and freeing thee. Be not afraid therefore to resign thyself wholly into my hands.

But, sayst thou, what if tribulation should last for a long time? O my son,

so long as my grace is not wanting to thee, why shouldst thou fear? Why shouldst thou care?

Is not that little and brief which passes with time? What is it in comparison with eternity? Wait a little while and the end shall come swiftly.

CHAPTER LXII

SCANDAL

WOE to that man through whom scandal cometh! It were better for him if a millstone were tied about his neck and he be sunk in the depths of the sea.

What punishment therefore awaits the priest who gives scandal!

How severely will he be punished who is bound by the duties of his office to declare my justices, convert sinners and prepare a perfect people, and who gives scandal to the children of Holy Mother Church!

There shall come upon him, my son, a day of wrath, a great day and exceedingly bitter.

Then my angels shall collect all scandals and cast them into the fiery furnace, and the scandals of priests shall be cast into the very depths of that furnace.

O priests, woe to the world on account of your scandals! But much more woe to your scandals on account of my anger!

Truly, my son, the wickedness of a scandalous priest is greater than the sin of Sodom which was destroyed in a moment.

Let me point out to you how that wicked man betrays me and wars against me.

I placed him over my people, saying: See to it that they adore me, and serve me alone.

But he, by his evil example, causes my servants to forget their allegiance to me, induces them to desert my standard, and enrolls them in the service of the devil.

Hence the army of Satan, my enemy, strengthened and augmented, rises up and fights more boldly against me.

Moreover, that wicked priest conspires with them against Christ, my Son, snatches from him his trophies and robs him of his victory.

Jesus has cast out the prince of this world, but the bad priest permits the prince of this world to rule over those whom he has drawn into sin by his scandals.

Jesus made his Church immaculate,

washing it in his blood; the members of that Church the wicked priest, by his scandals, soils and corrupts.

Yea more, my son; the scandals of a priest even stir up contumely and rebellion against the spirit of grace.

I have infused my Spirit into my sons of adoption that he might remain with them, but they, imitating the crimes of the priest, reject and cast out by their iniquity that Holy Spirit who is poured forth upon them; for he will not dwell in a body that is subject to sin.

See how he who ought to nourish in their hearts the fire of my Spirit, himself extinguishes that fire by his scandals.

O most wicked priest, woe to thee through whom such scandals come! Woe to thee who without reverence and piety officiatest at my altar! Thou leadest my sheep into irreverence, unbelief and impiety.

Woe to thee who art impure! By thy example thou plungest thy flock into the fetid pool of shameful pleasures.

Woe to thee who art avaricious and strivest to accumulate wealth! Thou

bringest upon the sacred ministry the contempt of thy flock, makest them eager for the service of idols and confirmest them in their avarice.

Woe to thee who without necessity becomest embroiled in law-suits! Thou stirrest up thereby quarrels and disputes in my flock.

Woe to thee who dost cherish hatred and enmity in thy heart and dost openly manifest it! Thou settest at naught by thine example the precept of holy charity and confirmest enemies in their hatred.

Woe to thee who art given to pride and vanity! By thy manner of acting thou destroyest holy humility and incitest thy flock to imitate dangerous vanities.

Woe to thee who hast the reputation of being a lover of good cheer! By thy habits thou renderest void, as far as in thee lies, the law of penance, and by thine excesses thou dost justify intemperance and living according to the flesh.

Woe to thee who dost not hesitate to sing love songs at social gatherings or to applaud the singer! By thy conduct thou

givest rein to all manner of lascivious remarks.

Woe to thee who becomest angry at those who offend thee and dost not hesitate to load maledictions upon them! Thou dost banish patience and meekness from thy flock, incitest parents to anger against their children, and dost confirm wicked men in the habit of venting their anger in blasphemy.

Woe to thee who devotest thyself from morning until night to vain sports and amusements, teaching thereby that it is lawful to spend one's time aimlessly, and to continually enjoy one's self in this life!

Woe to thee who art unkind to thy parents, to those who gave thee birth! Thou destroyest the piety and reverence of children and encouragest them in boldness and rebellious conduct.

O my son, far be it from thee to thus scandalize any one of mine. Furthermore, beware of giving scandal to even one of my little ones, I will not say by any sin but by the appearance of sin.

Yea, my son, even if to eat or drink

what is lawful should scandalize thy brother, do not touch it. Thou hast indeed the right to eat or drink but, if in a given circumstance by doing so thou wouldst give scandal to the weak, do not do it.

Thou hast the right to have a sister or relation with thee, to keep a certain housekeeper or to converse with a certain woman; but if in this thou shouldst be a stumbling-block to the weak, do not do it.

Thou hast the right to exact what is owing to thee but, if in doing this thou shouldst scandalize thy weak brother, do not do it.

Thou hast the right to discuss with learned friends the rules to be observed in the holy tribunal of penance, but if there be someone present who might be shocked by this, do not do it.

Thou hast the right to send away empty-handed a lazy or dissolute person who is in need, but if in doing this some weaker brother might be scandalized at what might appear hard-heartedness, do not do it.

Thou hast the right to reprimand a

certain stiff-necked and impenitent sinner, but if in doing so in the presence of a certain person thou shouldst shock him by the appearance of anger, do not do it; wait for another occasion.

Certain exercises are held in the church at which thou art not bound to be present, but if the people come and some one might be disedified by thine absence, do not scandalize him by staying away.

In all things be prudent that thou mayst not scandalize one of my little ones.

Strive on the contrary to be on all occasions an example to the faithful in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity.

So doing thou shalt save thyself and those who look to thee as their model.

CHAPTER LXIII

CHASTITY

MY son, behold Satan has desired to have thee that he might sift thee as wheat.

He seeks to devour all, but especially my priests; they are his food of predilection.

He tempts all, but my priests more than others because, if they sin, greater insult is offered to me, greater injury is done to my Church and greater scandal given to my people.

He strives to lead priests into all manner of vices, but especially into those which are opposed to chastity; because they are more serious, more degrading and sacrilegious.

Watch therefore, my son, lest the thief come and snatch from thee thy treasure which thou carriest in a fragile vase.

Keep thyself chaste; let all uncleanness, obscenity or scurrility be not so

much as mentioned by thee, as becomes a saint.

Out, ye dogs, ye impure, from my sanctuary!

A priest is ordained for me; he is my holy one; he shall not see corruption.

With his lips he calls down my flesh upon the altar; with his hands he touches me and he receives me into his heart. He should therefore be without stain, he should preserve purity of soul and body.

If he be impure and incontinent he defiles my sanctuary, he offers insult to my body, he renders himself guilty beyond others of my body and blood, and more than others he eats and drinks to himself judgment.

He who of old made void the law of Moses, was condemned to death without mercy; how much greater punishment is he deserving of who thus tramples me under foot!

Among mine apostles I have patiently borne with the proud, the ambitious, the avaricious, with him who denied me, and even with him who betrayed me; but I did not tolerate even the suggestion of

impurity among them. This vice is detested by me above all others.

My spirit shall not abide in thee, my son, if thou be flesh. I will destroy thee from before my face if thou walkest in the way of corruption.

Sodom and Gomorrha have been made an example of the eternal fire prepared for thee if thou allowest thy heart to burn with impure flames.

But who art thou, my son? Thou art called a saint, thou art said to be strong in virtue, thou art reputed to be wise; but what is in thy heart and in thy secret thoughts; what dost thou do in private?

Chastity is easily lost unless the greatest vigilance be exercised in preserving it.

How, therefore, dost thou act in times of temptation? Dost thou reject evil thoughts and subdue impure desires?

Hast thou made a covenant so that thou shouldst not so much as think upon a virgin; or, on the contrary, dost thou freely gaze upon young women and take satisfaction in admiring their beauty?

Dost thou abhor the society and con-

versation of lewd persons? Or on the other hand, dost thou imprudently join in their laughter?

Dost thou avoid the occasion of sin, or, on the contrary, dost thou joke with persons of the opposite sex or bandy compliments with them?

What about thy housekeeper? Is it not a danger to have one ministering to thee whose face thou frequently lookest upon?

Is she not younger than is prescribed by the holy rule of prudent men? Oh, beware of the danger. If thou dost not fear it, thou shalt perish in it.

How wilt thou remain chaste unless between thee and thy servant the presence of God ever intervenes, a wall of holy fear and a watchful vigilance; unless holy modesty direct all thy looks, words and acts; unless thy priestly authority keep that servant in a position of becoming reserve and check all useless conversations.

O my son, have a care to thyself. The Davids, the Samsons and the Solomons have fallen.

Oh, the danger! Believe one who has had experience, says St. Augustine. Before God I lie not; I have seen the cedars of Lebanon, the leaders of the flock fall victims to this plague, whose virtue was as much above suspicion as that of Jerome or Ambrose.

Again, my son, what about those girls and young widows who seek direction from thee? Is it not true that, under the appearance of piety and instruction, there lies the poison of familiarity and affection?

Fear, my son, for thyself; thou art not holier, nor stronger nor wiser than those who have fallen. Fear the sting of sin, the allurement of concupiscence, the poisoned breath of pestilence.

If thou art not conscious to thyself of any fault, my son, give thanks to me from the depths of thy heart; for no one can be continent unless through my grace.

But if thy heart reproach thee, let the tears of repentance furrow thy cheek.

Bewail thy sins and humbly repent; the more grievous has been thy fault, let the greater be thy penance. Return to

thy Father; he will mercifully relieve his repentant son.

Arise, and arise without delay; put far from thee the occasion of sin.

This, it is true, entails sacrifice, but the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away.

Chastise thy flesh; do not pamper it; otherwise it will become unruly, and against its assaults thou wilt not be able to preserve thy chastity.

Mortify thy senses; flee idleness as a pest; pray for graces; call upon Mary.

Do not again look backwards; do not again admit the old leaven into thy soul that thou mayst be, as thou shouldst be, pure and chaste.

CHAPTER LXIV

AMBITION

MY son, why did I come down from heaven? Assuredly not that I might take unto myself an earthly kingdom; my kingdom is not of this world. For what then? That I might save that which was lost.

Why hast thou become a priest? That thou mayst become after me a fisher of men, not that thou mightst sit on my right hand or my left hand in the kingdom of my Church.

That thou mightst be the servant of all and minister to all; not that thou mightst occupy the first seats in the synagogue.

What didst thou say on entering my sanctuary? Was it not this, my son: The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and my cup.

If the Lord, therefore, is the portion of thine inheritance, it is not glory nor honor nor dominion.

But, my son, Satan, the old serpent,

is not yet dead; he still comes among my children and, since he knows that the root of all evil is cupidity and pride, he strives in every possible way to arouse in my priests a desire for glory and honor.

He leads them to the pinnacle of the temple and, showing them therefrom all the kingdoms of the Church and the glories thereof, he says to them: See how greatly you can be exalted; seek, therefore, these honors and you shall be as gods.

Surely, what such and such men have obtained, you also can obtain.

Such and such office becomes thee equally as well as so and so; thou art as well qualified for the position as he.

Come then, seek the office of a bishop, it is surely a good work. A light should not be hidden under a bushel; elevate thyself therefore upon a candlestick.

By this temptation many are led astray; and these imprudent priests begin to despise humble and common duties.

Soon we find them aspiring to the high-

est positions, seeking the influence of friends in high places, running about and moving heaven and earth that they may attain to the position that they covet.

They forget that the true disciple does not choose the position but is chosen for the position by the Lord, does not presume to take to himself the honor unless he be called by God as Aaron was.

Thus I, my son, did not glorify myself that I might be made a high priest, but him that said unto me: Thou art my Son.

Oh, the wickedness of their desires! Oh, the blindness and hardness of their hearts! They wish to be greater than all and lower than none, to rule all and to be subject to no one, to dominate all and to minister to none. They seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's.

Oh, what vanity it is to thus run after honors and elevate themselves to a high position! For no matter how highly they are exalted, they will not be satisfied.

Oh, what foolishness to desire that glory which so quickly passeth away!

Where are they, my son, where are those lords and masters whom thou knewest so well, who shone forth decorated with the insignia of office? Alas! already others have assumed to themselves their honors.

Oh, what folly to emulate the example of those who are powerful and exalted, to desire similar positions and to give no thought to eternal happiness!

Oh, how brief is that glory which is given and received by men!

Oh, how false is that glory which keeps a man in anxiety while he is seeking for it; which pleases him but little when it is once attained, and serves merely to urge him on in quest of higher honors!

Oh, how much to be feared is that glory which exposes the priest to a greater fall and to a more severe judgment on the part of God, the more exalted is his position.

It shall come, it shall come, that terrible hour of judgment. Then how many will be seen to take with shame the lowest place who are now striving to choose

for themselves the first places and to recline in them!

How many then shall be humbled who are now striving to exalt themselves!

My son, seek my glory, seek fruitful labor.

Look not upon earthly mansions for they shall pass away, and they are not the place of thy resting.

Even though thou hadst lived in honors to this very day, what benefit would it be to thee if thou must die this moment?

Seek to do my will and to accomplish what is pleasing to me.

As willingly choose to be the least as others would to be the greatest.

Be as satisfied and contented in the lowest place as in the highest.

Let my will and the desire for mine honor so prevail in thee that it will afford thee greater consolation and please thee more than all blessings that thou hast received or may receive.

O my son, permit me to deal with thee as I will; I know what is best for thee; I, who dispose all things sweetly, plac-

ing, as I see fit, each member in the body of my Church.

Surely, my care for thee far outweighs all the anxious solicitude that thou mayst devote to thy welfare.

CHAPTER LXV

AVARICE

I THE Son of man, had not whereon to lay my head; I, my son, though I was rich became poor for thy sake that through my poverty thou mightst be rich.

And if I had said to thee, my son: Go, sell all thou hast and give it to the poor, assuredly thou wouldst have been obliged to do so.

But I spare thee; the more painful things I have reserved for myself; the milder precepts only I have given to thee.

I speak an human thing to thee because of thine infirmity lest, perhaps, thou go away sad like that young man whom I called to poverty.

Hearken, my son; thou must not lay up treasures to thyself on earth; thou canst not serve God and Mammon.

Flee avarice as a most heinous thing; it is indeed the very serving of idols; it is the root of all evil.

Look well to thyself, dearly beloved,

lest perhaps that wicked serpent find a place in thy heart unknown to thee; for very often avarice has its beginning in little and seemingly lawful things. It first appears to be but prudent economy, but it grows with years and, instead of being weakened by old age, becomes all the more deeply rooted.

If riches abound, set not thy heart upon them, but, on the contrary, be sincerely detached from all which thou hast so that, possessing temporal things, they may not possess thee, that thou mayst have them not to hoard but to distribute when occasion demands.

If, on the contrary, riches abound not, be not sad but rejoice. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Having food and wherewith to be clothed, with these be content; thou hast brought nothing into this world and there is no doubt but that thou wilt be unable to take anything hence.

The less thou hast, the freer thou art, the better prepared to follow after me; thou wilt more easily abandon the world in death, and thou wilt fear less on the

day of judgment. Grant that I may not say to thee: Woe to thee who art rich; nor that I may not speak thus: Remember, my son, that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime.

Come, answer me this, my son. Thou hast renounced the world, thou hast taken me for the portion of thine inheritance, nevertheless is it not true that thou desirest to become wealthy? Therefore by that very wish thou hast fallen into a snare and many evil desires which drag men down to perdition.

What dost thou seek in thy ministry? Is it not milk and wool, and not the salvation of thy flock?

Answer me, give an account. Wert thou not poor in the world and hast thou not become rich in the ministry?

Thy sheep were going astray, wealth was being sought for. Is it not true that thou didst turn from thy sheep to obtain the money? Count thy flock, count thy coins; how little hast thou done for one and how much for the other?

Is it not true that thy children asked for bread and thou didst not break it to

them? While at the same time, by strenuous labor, thou wast making more fertile thine already rich possessions and, with greatest diligence, wast multiplying thy holdings?

Were there not sick persons in thy parish whom thou didst not visit, while thou didst give every attention to thy herds?

Did not the wolf devour my sheep and thou didst not defend them, whilst night and day thou didst watch lest the thief should break into thy house?

Was not my church squalid in its poverty, while thy house abounded in richness?

Was not my table deserted, while thine was surrounded by bankers?

Did not my poor die of want, while thy coffers were being filled with coin?

What dost thou think of? What dost thou meditate upon? Is it not schemes for selling and buying to advantage, rather than plans to save and sanctify souls?

Where is thy heart? Is it not where thy treasure is?

Is it not true that thou demandest of thy people not piety and holy virtue, but harshly extortest from them what they owe thee?

Dost thou not spare the rich in the tribunal of penance and in the pulpit lest thou close for thyself the strings of their fat purses?

Art thou not hard on thyself, denying thyself proper food and decent clothes, not from motives of humility and mortification but through base cupidity?

Art thou not reputed by thy people to have the dropsy, ever drinking gold and never satisfied, a cow with a full udder but never giving any milk.

Thou shalt die, thou miser, and thou shalt not live; the gold of thine avarice thou shalt leave to rust and it shall cry out against thee on the last day.

The price of sacrileges, the blood of widows and orphans, the wretchedness of the poor shall cry out against thee in my sight. Thou shalt see and be angry, thou shalt gnash thy teeth and pine away; thy foolish desire shall perish.

Even in this world thy gold shall cry out against thee.

From thy coffers a scandal shall go forth to my people and, freed from thy tyranny, they shall curse thee, saying: O avaricious pastor, let thy money be with thee in perdition!

O Lazarus, four days buried and already corrupted in the grave of thy riches! Behold, I weep over thee; look upon my tears, listen to my voice.

Behold, I command thee: Come forth, cast aside the stone, open the box, loose the fetters; I do not wish that thou shouldst die but that thou shouldst be converted and live.

Scatter thy gold, give it to the poor; make to thyself friends of the mammon of iniquity; abandon filthy lucre.

O thou who hast imitated Judas in thine avarice, do not follow him to the halter.

O miser! O uncircumcised in heart and ears! How long wilt thou resist the Holy Spirit? How long shalt thou cry out: Bring, bring me gold!

Perhaps thou art chaste, sober,

learned, humble and pious, and in the folly of thy heart thinkest thyself to be holy; but thou art a miser and thou shalt perish; thou shalt die like the rich man and with him be buried in hell.

CHAPTER LXVI

THE ADMINISTRATION OF CHURCH PROPERTY

TO whom I have given much, of him I will require much, and to whom I have intrusted much, of him will I demand much.

An hour will come which is known to me; then thou shalt appear before me, my son, and I will question thee with regard to the talents thou hast received.

Behold, I have committed to thy care property and goods donated to me by the faithful that, serving by the altar, thou shouldst live by the altar.

But beware, my son, of abusing these things, of growing wealthy by the altar; these are the offerings of the faithful, the ransom of sinners, the patrimony of the poor, to be disposed of solely for the needs of the church and for charitable purposes.

Use therefore what is necessary for thy proper maintenance, but what is over and above that which is necessary to

maintain thee in a becoming and respectable manner, do not spend foolishly nor apply to the aid of thy relatives and friends.

Whither shall ye go, and where shall ye flee from my face who squander the property of the church in luxury and vanity?

Whither shall ye go, ye who exalt yourselves with the price of what is mine, and offer no honor to me?

Who stride forth in meretricious splendor and regal apparel, who glory in rings and golden ornaments that shine forth more resplendently than mine altar?

Who delight in feastings, choice wines and sweet music, and who recline on rich couches?

Who delight in the fat of the land and who abound in pleasures of every kind, who thus use my goods to serve your carnal pleasures?

Whither shall ye go from my face when the naked and the hungry shall cry out against you: It was our property that ye squandered; ye cruelly snatched

from us what ye spent uselessly; ye have not fed us, ye have starved us?

O sons of Heli, O sons of Belial! Hear me who am besieged by fat bulls.

The Jews said: It is not lawful for us to put this money in the corbona for it is the price of blood; and they bought with it a field for the burial of strangers.

But ye, more wicked than mine enemies, have purchased vanity and pleasure with the price of my blood and have thus spent, to the scandal of Christians and the destruction of souls, what was given to you for the aid of the poor.

Wherefore I will demand my flock of your hand; for this reason I will oblige you to desist from any longer feeding my sheep, or any longer feeding yourselves; I will free my flock from your hand that it may no longer be food for you.

O my son, if thou hast acquired much from the altar beyond what is necessary to clothe and maintain thee respectably, restore to the church and the poor what is theirs.

Remember that thou hast been placed

over my family that thou mayst give them their measure of wheat in due season.

Think of the number of my saints who, abounding in holy generosity, were not content with merely fulfilling this precept, but bestowed not only their wealth but even the necessaries of life upon the poor.

These have now treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor the moth consumes and where thieves break not in or steal.

These dwell not in worldly splendor, but in the eternal glory of the saints.

These are not clothed in purple and fine linen but in the eternal effulgence of my presence.

These are inebriated not with the juice of grapes but with the plenty of my house, and they shall drink of the torrent of my pleasure.

Imitate the faith of those the end of whose conversation thou seest.

CHAPTER LXVII

ALMSGIVING

I HAVE spoken to thee the truth, my son, and I know that thou believest me. Verily, I am present to thee in every pauper, in every sick man, in every petitioner and in every afflicted member of my flock.

As often as you did it unto the least of mine you did it unto me, and as often as you did it not unto them, you did it not unto me.

Have faith like the grain of mustard seed and, when thy brother who is in need asks aid of thee, say within thyself: Behold, Jesus stands at my door and knocks.

Oh, blessed am I to whom it is given to know that, in aiding such a poor man, I am coming to the assistance of my God himself.

Oh, my soul, how shall the charity of God abide in me if I harden my heart against him?

Oh, my soul, it is surely better to hide

thyself in his bosom than to lay up treasures of gold upon earth.

Come, let us give and lend money at interest to the Lord. If we have much, let us bestow abundantly; if we have little, let us give freely even of that little.

Let us break bread for Jesus who is hungry; let us conduct the poor and outcast Jesus into our house and clothe his nakedness.

O my soul, it is commanded that we thus open our hands.

Thou hast sinned, my son. Dost thou wish to be purified? Give alms of thine abundance and I will create in thee an humble and contrite heart which I will never despise, and behold all things shall be clean to thee.

This is my word and it shall not return to me empty. Oh, if thou didst but ponder well upon this, with what liberality wouldst thou give, my son!

Thou feelest thyself, as it were, abandoned by me; that mine anger is stirred up against thee. Dost thou wish to be reconciled with me? Dost thou wish to placate thy God and turn aside his an-

ger? Give an alms and it shall make a propitiation for thee against every evil, and I shall be merciful to thee.

Thy days are evil, temptation annoys thee, persecution is stirred up against thee, trouble is pressing upon thee. Give, my son, give an alms, and in that day the Lord will free thee from evil; will conserve thee, will enliven thee and make thee blessed upon the earth. Thy God will not abandon thee into the hands of thine enemies, and will afford thee abundant aid.

Dost thou wish to obtain special graces, some rich favor for thyself and for thy flock? Give and it shall be given unto thee. Give liberally and the Lord will give into thy bosom good measure, pressed down and running over.

Dost thou wish to be saved? Give an alms and it will enable thee to find mercy and eternal life, and will not suffer thy soul to go into darkness.

Yes, my son, in the day of judgment thou shalt certainly hear these most sweet words of thy Saviour: Come, ye blessed of my father, possess the kingdom pre-

pared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and thirsty and you gave me food and drink.

He knows, my son; Satan, thine enemy, knows that all this is true.

He knows also in very truth that, if thou wilt not give alms, a great deprivation of grace threatens thee in this world and the severest penalty in the world to come.

He knows that, in mine anger, I shall say to the hard-hearted and the unmerciful: Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire, for I was in need and you did not come to mine assistance.

Wherefore, by every means in his power he strives to close up the bowels of thy mercy.

Thou hast little, says he, and if thou givest thou shalt have still less. Wilt thou lose in a moment what thou hast acquired through much labor?

It is better for thee to receive than to give. To-day thou hast the means of livelihood, but later on what shalt thou have?

And what if the hail should lay waste

thy fields? If the fire should destroy thy house? If sickness should come upon thee? If thou shouldst attain to a helpless old age? Provide for thy future.

And who is he who asks assistance of thee? A beggar indeed, but is he really poor? Perhaps he is simulating poverty. He is a lazy fellow; let him work and he will not be in need.

How do many others who, having nothing from any other source, learn how to earn bread by the sweat of their brow?

It is better to come to the assistance of such industrious poor. Thy barns are not large enough to contain thy harvest. Hire these men to enlarge them, to decorate thy house, to change thy gardens into a paradise of pleasure. Thus thou wilt provide for them and, at the same time, for thyself.

Behold, my son, behold the snares of the enemy. See how he strives to turn thy face away from the poor and the orphaned whom I have intrusted to thy care.

See how he strives to bring it about

that thou, a hard-hearted priest, shouldst pass by, to the scandal of my people, while perhaps some Samaritan kindly gives assistance.

Perhaps it is true, my son, that thou hast but little. Nevertheless, when dying thou shalt not have spent all. If then, by giving something of that little thou shouldst make thyself poorer, remember that I when I was rich became poor for thy sake.

Perhaps what thou hast, thou hast acquired with much labor. But, my son, if it cost thee so much, take care that thou retain it for eternity. Knowest thou not that by giving on earth thou layest up treasures in heaven?

It is better for thee, says Satan, to receive than to give. I, my son, have taught thee the contrary. Truly, he who receives now shall lose in death what he received, and he who gives now shall find what he gave in eternal life.

Provide for thyself, sayest the enemy, lay up stores against hunger, against the necessities of life and the needs of old age. But I say to thee: Provide for thy

soul, provide for thy salvation, provide for thine eternity.

No matter how much thou layest up on earth thou canst not add one day to thy life; but thou canst, my son, earn for thyself a happy eternity and acquire many added degrees of happiness in heaven according to the abundance of thine almsgiving. This, my son, is a most useful and most wise dispensation of providence.

Be not solicitous, saying: What shall I eat, or wherewith shall I be clothed? I know that thou hast need of these things. I have care of thee.

Hast thou ever seen a charitable man abandoned or seeking bread in his old age? Why dost thou doubt, O thou of little faith?

But perhaps that beggar was not in need. What then? Can it be that if he were not in need thou shouldst have acted in vain? By no means.

It is true that he may have lied to thee, but by aiding him thou hast most certainly wrought a good work in me.

But perhaps, my son, he of whose sin-

cerity thou doubtest is a veritable Lazarus; truly a poor man in great need.

And if thou deniest him an alms on account of the slight suspicion suggested by the enemy, thou actest rashly and wrongly. Choose therefore the safer part; open thy hands to him.

Let him work, says Satan, and he will not be in need. Yes, my son, but I say to thee: Do thou give and thou shalt be saved.

Sow, therefore, that thou mayst reap. Give of thine abundance to the poor; give kindly, give cheerfully; for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.

Give especially to those of the household of the faith and to the more deserving poor.

Give not that thou mayst be seen by men and thus receive thy reward in time, but in my sight. For my sake give in secret, and my Father who seeth in secret will reward thee.

And my people will not forget thy charity. They will venerate thee, they will love thee, they will confide in thee, they will hearken to thee and obey thee.

And at last when death shall come, thou shalt be in rest and thy justice shall endure forever.

CHAPTER LXVIII

TEMPERANCE

WHY hast thou become a priest, my son? Most assuredly that thou mayst seek my kingdom, draw others to it, and at last some day possess it with them.

But my kingdom is not food or drink; nor shall they enter into it who live according to the flesh.

O son of the kingdom! If thou but knew what that heaven is like to which thou art called and for which thou strivest, thou wouldst surely not need to be moved to contempt for earthly delights.

The world and all its concupiscences would indeed seem exceedingly vile to thee, so that, merely bearing with the necessity of satisfying thy daily wants, thou wouldst cry out from thy heart:

Oh, would that I did not need to eat or drink! Would that these things were

not necessary for me, but only things that are spiritual! Oh, unhappy man that I am, who shall free me from the body of this death!

Truly, my son, thou walkest by faith and not by sight; thou hast not yet laid hold of the good things of which it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

And, alas, thou carriest about in thy mortal flesh and to the last breath thou shalt carry about the law of the senses, which wars against the law of the spirit.

See to it, my son, that thine appetite does not rule thee, but that it be subject to thee and that thou rulest it; wherefore wage war continually against the law of sin.

That law of sin lost paradise to Adam and the whole human race, and cast into hell the rich man who feasted sumptuously.

Nature must be sustained; take therefore what is necessary, but to choose those things that most delight the appetite or to indulge to excess in eating or drinking, the holy law forbids; for other-

wise the flesh would lord it over the spirit.

Watch! Watch! Each one is strongly allured by the desire for sensual pleasure and, if thou dost not use restraint, thou shalt soon go beyond the measure of sobriety and temperance, and thou wilt then realize that thy servant which has been too indulgently pampered has become rebellious.

O my son, one thing is necessary. Dost thou wish to conquer thyself? Dost thou wish to rule in the midst of thine enemies the concupiscences of the flesh? Restrain thine appetite, and thou wilt more easily hold in check every movement of the flesh.

Violence is indeed necessary for this work; and he has a hard fight before him who strives to conquer himself.

Gird thyself therefore as a man, prepare thy soul for temptation, remember thy last end and thou shalt not sin.

Propose to thyself to do from a spirit of penance what probably thou wouldst not do from a motive of simple prudence.

Look back upon thy life, consider how

many faults thou hast committed, how often thou hast offended God by sin, and say to thyself: Oh, what would have become of me if I had died and had been judged in the midst of these?

But truly thy mercy has spared me, O Lord, and there remains for me either to do penance now or after death to suffer a more severe penalty.

The more I spare my flesh now and the more I indulge my carnal appetite, the more severely shall I be punished hereafter and the more material I lay up for the burning.

Think of the punishment in the world to come and say to thyself: Oh, if my soul were detained in the flames of purgatory and could free itself from torment as it now can by restraining the inordinate appetite, surely it would do so and do so with the greatest zeal.

O my soul, do now what thou wouldst wish to have done then, and all will be well with thee.

Look upon me, the finisher of virtues incline thine ear and listen to me saying to thee: Behold, I fasted forty days in

the desert, neither eating nor drinking; behold, I thirsted upon the cross and was refreshed with vinegar and gall.

And wouldst thou be a pampered member under a head so austere and mortified? Wouldst thou, a wrong-doer and a sinner, wish to live in luxury and to feast sumptuously?

I, the Master, have suffered want; and wouldst thou, the disciple, wish to abound in good things? I, thy Saviour, have thirsted; and wouldst thou, the redeemed, wish to be inebriated with pleasures?

My kingdom was not of this world, and dost thou wish to revel in the delights of kings? Dost thou, a man of God, wish to serve thy belly?

My son, my son, if thou wishest to come after me, deny thyself and bear about in thy body my mortification.

Avoid feastings; if thou lovest them, thou lovest the danger and shall perish in it, for there concupiscence flames up like a fire.

It is true that it is not possible for thee to absent thyself from all social gather-

ings; some of these are justified by charity, or by existing custom, or even by zeal.

I myself ate with publicans and sinners because these, being ill, had need of a physician.

If thou indulgest in unnecessary banquets, the poor will cry out and say: See how the priest indulges in luxuries at our expense, while we suffer need!

The laborers and mechanics will raise their voices saying: See how the priest abounds in plenty, whilst we eat hard bread in the sweat of our brows.

Thy flock will rise up against their pastor saying: Physician, cure thyself, teach thyself to be penitent, sober and laborious.

And truly, my son, what sort of life is that of a pleasure-loving priest? He rises late, he prays but little, he hastens through his office, he says Mass without preparation and devotion, he then hurries to his meal, he indulges in the delights of the flesh, he wastes his time with companions in sports and idle conversations, he goes to bed late and, tired

out, he falls asleep without having given any time to recollection.

Thus a man, following after sensuality, little by little neglects the necessary exercises of piety, forfeits the love of God and becomes at length an animal man, unfit for the things of God, study and the duties of his sacred ministry.

CHAPTER LXIX

THE PRIEST'S ATTIRE

MY son, let thy modesty be known to all men; walk as you have the model prescribed by the Church.

If thou dost not conform to the law of the Church, thou shalt be as the heathen and the publican; see therefore that thou despise not the law of thy Mother; she has decreed what shall be the color and the style of thy clothes; observe her rules.

She has prescribed simplicity and becomingness in priestly attire; comply with her rules; she discountenances the wearing of soiled and tattered garments; cast them aside.

How, my son, has the gold become dim, the fine color been changed?

How many there are among my priests who are ashamed of my uniform! They belong to the royal priesthood and they disdain to wear a royal crown.

They have renounced the world and yet they love to wear clothes of the most

worldly pattern; they are my soldiers and scarcely have they enlisted and been enrolled when they rebel and cast aside my uniform.

They are my servants yet they strive to please men; they are clerics and they appear as bridegrooms; they are of the world, therefore they love the world and the world loves them.

O foolish men! They are esteemed indeed by worldlings, but they are an abomination in my sight; they are ashamed of me before men; I shall be ashamed of them before my Father who is in heaven.

O my son, avoid the society of such disedifying clerics; put far from thee the vanity and pride of their demeanor.

Follow not the example of those, my son, who do not give themselves wholly to worldly vanity, but who nevertheless are undisciplined and regardless of rules, saying that they do not bother about these trifles.

Neither follow the example of those, my son, who by their slovenly attire

rather provoke laughter than excite veneration.

But study and imitate those who by the becomingness of their external apparel show forth the interior integrity of their lives; let thy feet walk in their footsteps.

I will observe them, I will imitate them, O Lord; it is indeed good for me to follow their example.

It is good for me, like them, not to violate one iota or tittle of the ecclesiastical law.

It is good for me, like them, to be faithful in little things that in the greater also I may be like unto them—faithful.

Oh, how beautiful are their footsteps, O Lord; how powerfully does not their manner promote virtue! What reverence is inspired by their serious deportment, their humility, their simplicity, their modesty!

I will follow, O Lord, their example and strive to attain to their standard.

O Lord, the part of mine inheritance my portion in the land of the living!

Never again shall mine eyes look with complacency upon worldly vanity.

What have I to do with the world and worldly splendor? What have I to do with the foppery and elegance of effeminate men?

One thing I have asked of thee, O Lord Jesus, one thing I seek, that I may ever bear about in my body thy modesty, so that thy life may be made manifest in my mortal flesh.

CHAPTER LXX

THE HOME OF THE PRIEST

MY son, be one who ruleth well his own house. If thou knowest not how to preside over thine own household, how shalt thou exercise care in the management of my church?

Thy life should be in all things a model for thy flock so that they may be directed, not only by what they hear from the pulpit or what thou teachest in the tribunal of penance, but also by thy whole manner of acting.

Be careful, therefore, that whatever they may see or observe in thy house be in accordance with what thou teachest.

Thou teachest that man has not here a lasting city, that he is here a stranger and a pilgrim.

What thou declarest in words let thy acts bear witness to; let thy home be so ordered as if it were a transitory dwelling.

Let it be simple, let it not lack necessary furnishings; let what is superfluous be absent from it; let it cry out to all

those who enter therein: This is enough for a man who is going to die.

Thou teachest that the kingdom of the Christian is not of this world, that all its glory is from within, that all the splendor of the world is to be held as dross.

Let this be confirmed also by evidence; let all the vain display with which the children of this world adorn their homes be absent from thy dwelling; through it let thy modesty be known to all those who enter therein.

Thou teachest that those who live according to the flesh shall go into perdition; that we must seek the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth.

Show forth this truth by thine example; let the furnishings of thy house and thy table be such as become a holy man, truly spiritual, truly sober and truly dead to himself.

Thou teachest that all immodesty, obscenity and scurrility should not even be named among Christians, as becometh saints.

Let there not, therefore, be in thy

house any statue, book or picture that would even be suggestive of such.

Thou teachest my people that they must not glory except in my cross, that in it is salvation, life and protection from enemies; let therefore my cross be the special adornment and glory of thy house. Set it up as a sign that it may be to thee thyself a reminder of my love and an ever-present incentive to virtue; and that sin-laden souls who enter thy home may look upon it, be converted and live.

Thou teachest that in the Christian home all things ought to be done with decorum and in an orderly manner.

Therefore provide for and see to it that all things about thee be clean and properly arranged; let the time for prayer, for spiritual reading, for rising and retiring, for laboring be fixed and sedulously observed.

Thou teachest that those who have not care of their own, and especially of those of their house, have denied the faith and are worse than infidels.

Therefore if thy father, mother,

brother or sister dwell with thee, see to it that they lead an honorable and pious life, and that they be an example to the faithful.

And if in any way they should be a source of scandal, be it thy mother or be it thy father, ask, beseech, command if necessary that they correct their faults.

Thou art a priest; thou hast power greater than they; thou owest this to me and to my people.

If they refuse to amend their lives, provide for their maintenance elsewhere.

See to it also that thy servants and housemaids are in all things obedient to thee, not answering back but respectful in all things, that the teaching of the Church may shine forth in all.

Watch carefully over them and, if on their part anything should happen which might scandalize the least of mine, strive earnestly to check the evil, remove the cause from thy house.

It becometh a holy priest to have about him only holy servants and domestics.

Thou teachest that Christians should be charitable, pursuing hospitality.

Show thy faith in deeds. Let thy house be, as far as in thee lies, an overflowing fountain of alms and assistance, so that it may be said of thee what of old was said of a certain holy priest, that he was the guardian of all the needy.

In a word let thy home be a holy home from which is excluded every shadow of evil; a pious home in which everything is fashioned after the model of piety;

A paternal home which my flock will approach with reverence and confidence, knowing that there dwells a man of God.

CHAPTER LXXI

THE NECESSITY OF ABIDING WITH THY FLOCK

I HAVE not left my children orphans but I have willed to be with them even unto the consummation of the world.

Do thou also, my son, remain constantly in the midst of the people to whom thou hast been sent, knowing that if thou wishest to travel much abroad thou wilt do much injury to thyself and to thy flock.

What wouldst thou think, my son, if a man had a hundred sheep and committed them to the care of his servant, and that servant went off strolling through the neighboring district enjoying himself with his friends, in the meantime leaving the sheep to themselves without a guardian?

Certainly thou wouldst say: He is a wicked servant, and when his master shall come, he shall send him away and appoint him his portion with unbelievers.

Why therefore should I spare thee, my son, if thou dost abandon the flock redeemed by my blood and committed to thy care, that thou mayst spend thy time in useless journeyings?

My son, remain and watch for thine adversary; the devil goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

Remain and watch that thou mayst withstand him and that thy flock may not become his prey.

Again, my son, if a certain man had a store and he left his servant in charge of it saying to him: Do business for me till I return, wait for customers and sell them what they want.

And if that servant, weary of the monotony of business, should go off first with some friends and then with some others, and in the meantime customers should come, go away empty-handed, buy elsewhere and thus business be ruined and the merchant lose his profit, what wouldst thou think of that servant?

Assuredly, thou wouldst say that he is an unfaithful servant, deserving of being flogged and cast out by his master.

But, my son, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant. I am the Master of the business of souls, and I have placed thee over that business that thou mayst dispense my mysteries at all times to all who seek them.

But if thou, my son, weary of this watchful waiting go off here and there, it may easily happen that someone in imminent danger of death may urgently request the last sacraments; that another, moved by an extraordinary grace, may seek with true sorrow for his sins the wine and oil of penance.

But thou art absent and thus gain comes not to me.

The gain of that sick person who passes to another life with his sins unremitted.

The gain of that sinner moved to penance who when he did not find thee at the moment of grace became soon forgetful of holy fear and will not again return to thee.

For months and years perhaps he will remain impenitent in his sins: *O lucrum cessans, O damnum emergens!*

Lastly, what wouldst thou think, my son, if a householder should appoint someone to watch lest a thief might come and break into his home?

But he, abandoning his post, goes away, while in the meantime the thief comes, breaks into and robs his house.

Verily, thou wouldst say: That man is guilty of theft and robbery.

My son, again changing the name, I have pronounced the same judgment on the pastor who does not remain at home.

While he is absent, the door leading to the home of my flock lies open; an evil man comes and through his scandal enters and takes away the word out of the heart of the faithful lest they be saved.

O strong man armed, guard therefore constantly thy court; when thou art present all things which thou dost possess shall be in peace. But when thou art absent the strong enemy will come and take away all thine armor wherein thou didst trust and distribute thy spoils.

My son, what dost thou teach fathers and mothers? Is it not this, that they

should never leave their little children alone to themselves but should ever guard and watch over them lest perhaps they fall into the fire or into the cistern, or lest some other accident might befall them.

O my son, no one should be more a father and a mother than thou; therefore keep thy children under thy care as the bird doth the brood under her wings.

Be not like a fleeing mercenary whose own the sheep are not.

Take care therefore not to be absent from thy flock unless necessity demand it; and then see to it that a good and faithful friend properly fulfills thy duties.

CHAPTER LXXII

OUR HOLY FATHER, THE POPE

I THE Saviour of the world, have asked my Father and he hath given me the nations for mine inheritance.

Behold, I rule from sea to sea and from the shore thereof even to the uttermost ends of the world, pouring out my blessings upon all the peoples of the earth.

I have multiplied my seed above the stars of heaven; my flock is spread over the whole earth, and I the good Pastor have prepared for them my fold, my dearly beloved Church.

That fold, my son, shall never be destroyed. My Church shall remain unshaken even unto the consummation of the world.

The foundation of that fold is Peter. Upon this rock I have built my Church. and just as he who destroys the foundation of a house demolishes the whole house, so he who would banish Peter

and his successors would overthrow the whole Church.

Hold therefore, my son, hold to the unshaken faith and unity of Peter and his successors.

He who is not with them is against me; and he that gathereth not with them scattereth.

My sheep hear their voice and those who do not hearken to it are not of my fold.

Look, my son, at those wretched multitudes of sheep who, abandoning Peter, have wished to build to themselves a sheepfold upon another foundation.

See how like they are to the man who builds his house upon the sand.

The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon those houses, and they fell, and great was the ruin thereof.

Look at Greece, look at England, and so many other nations that separated themselves from Peter.

See how they lost not only unity but also that faith itself without which it is impossible to please me.

On the other hand, behold the faithful races that have remained in the fold built upon Peter.

See how they stood unhurt and unafraid amid the ruins of a world tottering to its fall.

The rains of error fell, the floods of persecution came, the winds of heresy blew, and their churches fell not for they were built upon a rock.

No heretic ever sits in the chair of Peter; in it faith never fails.

Wherefore, my son, that old serpent, that most vicious enemy, who hath wrought so wickedly in the sanctuary, never found a more efficacious means of robbing and injuring my sheep than by separating them from Peter and his successors.

Examine closely all the heresies that have sprung up in the Church and are springing up to this day, and thou wilt see that the only stability that they possessed had its source in this separation from the Roman Pontiff.

Dost thou wish, my son, to keep thy flock securely in the way of truth and

salvation? See to it that the more fiercely the devil and his agents attack the Roman See, with all the greater zeal thou and thy flock remain firmly devoted to it, knowing that there can be but one fold and one pastor.

Watch carefully, my son, and stand immovable in the faith of the See of Peter.

Not only is Peter the foundation of my much-beloved Church, but he is the pastor of all my lambs and sheep, the chief of all the bishops and the visible head of the whole body of my Church.

Ponder well upon these words, my son, consider diligently those titles of the Roman Pontiff.

If he is the pastor of all and the chief of the bishops themselves, therefore even thou, no matter how exalted thou mayst be in my Church, art one of his flock and beneath him in dignity.

If he is the visible head of my Church, thou oughtst to venerate him as thou wouldst venerate me whose vicar he is.

Beware of those, my son, who would strike my vicar and who do not blush to

heap contumely on the chief of my teachers.

Hold in horror and detestation as thou wouldst the very works of the devil books that impiously attack him, and strive as far as possible to remove them from the hands of the people, knowing that they are incentives to rebellion, not against an earthly prince but against me, the Supreme Ruler of the Church and the whole world.

Retain therefore the greatest respect for the Holy See, manifest for it sincere love, unshaken fidelity and due obedience.

CHAPTER LXXIII

OBEDIENCE TO ONE'S BISHOP

BEHOLD, I have commanded thee, my son, to be obedient to thy prelates, to be subject to them; and thou hast promised to do so.

Thou hast promised obedience to thy bishop and his successors. Keep that promise and thou shalt be precious in my sight, for obedience is better than sacrifice.

I offered not sacrifice and oblations to my Father, but when a body was prepared for me, I came that I might do his will.

The things that are pleasing in his sight I have always done; I was made obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross.

Thy prelate is thy pastor, thy bishop, whom my Spirit has appointed to rule with others my Church of which thou art a member; for he watches over thee as being to render an account of thy soul. See, therefore, that he may do this with joy and not with grief.

Be subject willingly for God's sake, obeying rather from charity than from necessity.

It is indeed, my son, much safer to be subject to others than to rule.

In humble subjection under the rule of thy bishop thou shalt find much rest; but if thou withdrawest thyself from obedience, thou shalt withdraw thyself also from grace.

If thou dost not submit thyself willingly to the rule of others, it is certainly a sign that thou art very carnal, that thou livest not in me but in thyself, and that thou lovest thyself inordinately.

What great thing is it for thee, my son, who art but dust, to subject thyself to man; when I, the Omnipotent and the Most High, who have created all things from nothing, have humbly become subject for thy sake?

I made myself the lowest of all in order to conquer thy pride by my humility.

Learn to obey, to humble thyself, who art dust and ashes, and to train thyself to perfect obedience.

Thou wilt perhaps murmur within thyself, saying: Why does he find fault with me? Why does he command that?

What is it that thou sayest, my son; he who touches him, touches the pupil of my eye.

The rebuke seems to thee too harsh, the commandment too severe. Foolish man, what hast thou to complain about? O wretched sinner, who hast so often offended God and merited the pains of hell, what right hast thou to complain?

Be critical rather with thyself and suffer not anger to dwell in thee.

But what is the sense of this rule or of that? In necessary things I will obey, but I am not concerned with trifles.

What, my son? Dost thou wish to judge the judge, to rule the ruler?

Thou claimest that it is a foolish command thy prelate has given thee, therefore thou already despisest him. Knowest thou not that he who despiseth him, despiseth me?

Thou sayest that the bishop makes useless rules. Be not more wise, my son, than it behooveth to be wise; if the

commands of thy superior seem to thy rash judgment useless, assuredly the observance of his commands is not unimportant.

Have a care to thyself. Thou shalt render an account not of the command but of the observance of the precept.

Obey, therefore, thy bishop without complaining; obey as the hand obeys the head. Without hesitation or murmuring it does whatever it is commanded to do by the head. Behold thy model; do thou in like manner.

My son, I implore thee, recognize who it is that is placed over thee in the Lord and admonishes thee. Hold him in the greatest affection, show him every mark of respect. He is my anointed.

Beware, therefore, of disobeying him, of rebelling against him, of murmuring or speaking ill against him.

Mary, when she murmured against Moses, was punished by leprosy; Core, Dathan and Abiron, despising Aaron, were swallowed up by the earth; fire consumed the messenger from Ochozias because he laughed at Elias.

Death rightly was the portion of him who despised and refused to obey the command of the priest of the Old Law. How much more punishment he deserves, thinkest thou, who spurns the bishop of the New Law, who despises me and thereby offers insult to my Spirit of grace?

CHAPTER LXXIV

FRATERNAL CHARITY AMONG PRIESTS

THOU shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. This, my son, is the second commandment. like unto the first and great commandment of the law.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as I have loved thee. This is the new commandment which I have given thee.

If thou dost not observe it, my son, thou shalt remain in death. How canst thou love thy God whom thou seest not if thou lovest not thy brother whom thou seest?

O my son, this is preeminently my commandment; and its observance alone is sufficient.

Thou knowest how often I have asked my Father that my disciples might be one as I and the Father are one.

Thou knowest how many times I prayed for that when I was about to leave the world, what repeated injunctions I gave them that they might be made perfect in one.

How am I straitened, my son, until it be accomplished!

O priests! Ye shall be my friends if ye shall do what I have commanded you.

O leaders of my flock! As I have sanctified myself that the members of my fold might be holy, so do you love one another that my flock may abide in mutual love.

Being many, you are one body, all who partake of one bread. Be therefore one heart and one soul.

By this shall all men know that you are my true ministers, if you thus manifest love for one another.

Love one another; and I shall be glorified in you and the world will believe that the Father has sent me and that I have sent you.

Love one another; and I shall remain with you and shall be ever in your midst; for through this charity ye shall ever remain united as one in my name.

Love one another; and the world will admire you, will hearken to your voice, will obey you, will venerate and imitate you.

Love one another; and through you the Church shall shine forth in splendor and be extended from sea to sea, even to the ends of the earth.

Love one another; and even hell itself will tremble in your presence, knowing that it cannot prevail against my children when they are united in that charity by which they repose in my heart protected as by a citadel, sheltered under my protecting wings as living members of my mystical body, mutually aiding one another and thus almost as unconquerable as my body itself.

My little children, love one another as do the members perfectly united in one body.

If one of you suffer, suffer with him; if one of you be exalted, rejoice with him.

Prevent one another in honor, commanding inferiors not harshly but kindly, obeying superiors humbly and from the heart.

Lend an assisting hand to thy brother, aid him by thy prayers, spur him on by

thy good example and direct him with wise counsel.

Love not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Love one another; and never wound any brother by detraction, humiliate him by contempt or offend him by arrogance.

Love one another; and do not even in secret harbor in thy heart any envy or dislike or suspicion against any of thy brethren.

O Lord, how good and how pleasant it is to see priests thus united in one in the bonds of fraternal charity!

Oh, wonderful precept of holy love! Oh, what good seed didst thou sow in thy field, O Lord, when thou gavest to us this commandment!

Whence then, O Lord, the cockle? Whence then so many disputes, so many divisions, so many hatreds, so many enmities among thy priests, many of them, alas, enduring even until death?

Whence, my son? From this source, from their concupiscences.

Here is the cause. Many love in a

natural and carnal, but few in a holy and spiritual manner. In many the old Adam, proud, grasping, envious and impatient, still abides. Let me explain, my son, and thou shalt understand.

One dislikes another because the latter obtained an office or a dignity to which he was himself aspiring, was promoted to a high station while he was appointed to an obscure and lowly one.

As though all should be apostles and prophets; as though I could not make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor!

One, elevated to a position of authority and puffed up with his new importance, despises those subject to him and, as it were, tramples them underfoot.

As though they were not his brothers, as though he were not like to them, dust and ashes, as though it were beneath him to associate with them!

One is opposed to another because the latter surpasses him in reputation for learning.

As if all should be doctors and it were not lawful for me to bestow on whom

I will the ornament and fame of scholarship!

One envies another because he is more successful in converting souls.

As if all should have the grace of healing and I could not give the increase through whom I will!

One opposes in an unholy rivalry another who is more eloquent than he.

As though all must speak with tongues and I could not, at my good pleasure, give wisdom to whom I please!

One harbors enmity towards another because his own laxity is condemned by the other's holy life.

One, proud of his own knowledge and piety, holds in contempt those whom he esteems less learned and pious.

He who is miserly is a friend to no one, and drives everyone away from him lest he incur the cost of entertaining them.

He who is impatient cannot bear with those who dislike, criticize or make fun of him; he even passionately hates them and refuses to pardon them when they seek forgiveness.

Behold, my son, how corrupt human

nature, how self-love restrains even priests from the practice of holy charity. It will do likewise with thee if thou art not on thy guard.

If thou givest ear to it, thou shalt love not others but thyself alone. Thou shalt desire that all others be subject to thine authority, flatter thee and minister to thee. Thou wilt not suffer any one to be more holy, more learned or more exalted than thyself.

Yea more, that cold self-affection, in order that it may be provided with an apparently legitimate excuse for disliking others, will picture to itself in them many faults which it will multiply, magnify and reveal. The motes it will change into beams; it will make thee believe, or at least suspect, much evil of others.

If it has led thee into aversion to some one, it will strive to change that aversion into hatred; it will stir thee up to murmur against, despise and speak ill of thy brother.

Hence disputes, quarrels, enmities which often go down with the dying priest into the dust of the grave.

Behold my son, how the wicked enemy has sown cockle in my field.

See, how there are no hatreds among priests that have not their origin in some concupiscence or passion.

O my son, if thou wishest to preserve this necessary charity towards thy brother priests, keep all thy passions in subjection, abstain from all inordinate self-love.

For as long as thou remainest wrapt up in thyself, thou shalt be an alien to the community of clerical brotherhood.

O Lord, I will love my brother priests; in this I will spend myself and be spent, knowing that if I have not this charity, whatever else I may possess will profit me nothing.

I will love the brethren and be patient and kind towards all. I will not envy, I will not deal perversely, I will not be puffed up.

I will not be ambitious, I will not seek what is mine, I will not become angry, I will think no evil.

I will not rejoice in iniquity, but will

rejoice with the truth; will bear all things, believe all things, endure all things.

I will love and love always; my charity shall never fail.

I will indeed hate the wicked (Ps. CXVIII, 113) because they are detestable in thy sight, O Lord; but in my hatred of them I will lovingly show mercy desiring most earnestly that they be converted to the heart.

I will, with thine aid, O Lord, seek out these wretched brothers, speak to them, draw them to me, entreat them and meekly reproach them. Only when they shall refuse to hear thy Church will I look upon them as heathens and publicans.

For the rest, I will not of myself judge that I may not be judged; I will not condemn that I may not be condemned.

Nor is this enough, O Lord. I am well aware that if I love only those who love me it will profit me nothing, for even sinners do this.

I will love even my enemies; I will do good to those who hate me, bless those

who curse me and pray for those who calumniate me.

I will forgive from the heart those who have offended and injured me, that I may be merciful as thou art merciful, O loving Saviour, who makest the sun to rise upon the just and the unjust.

CHAPTER LXXV

PRUDENCE IN REGARD TO WOMEN

I HAVE said to thee, my son, and I beseech thee never to forget it: On account of the beauty of women many have perished.

On account of Eve, the first man; on account of Delilah, the strongest man; on account of the wife of Urias, the most religious man; on account of strange women, the wisest man fell most wretchedly.

Who art thou, therefore, that thou shouldst dare to treat with them without the most prudent reserve?

O my son, O my disciple, shalt thou ever be above thy Master? And if I, Immutable Sanctity, was ever most circumspect in regard to women, shall it be permitted thee, a reed shaken by the wind, to be incautious?

True it is, their conversation could have for me no danger; but I wished to give thee an example that thou mightst act accordingly.

Learn of me that thy conversations with them be few, brief and serious.

Learn not to talk to vain Samaritans, unless it be to suggest conversion and penance.

Learn not to hold converse with embarrassed and humiliated sinners, save to give them peace and to teach them to lead a new life.

Learn not to talk to pious Chanaanites but in a grave and dignified manner.

Learn to dismiss, even with severity, those who come to thee on account of thy reputation for sanctity, if they give evidence of too much human affection.

Learn not to visit holy Marthas and Marys, except for the sake of their brother Lazarus, or for some reason of religion, necessity or charity.

Learn not to gossip with them about worldly trifles, but to discuss the one thing necessary, the better part which those in heaven enjoy.

Learn not to call upon women who are haughty, indolent, talkative, attired in the latest fashion or devoted to the vanities of the world, but rather to visit and

console the sick, the bereaved, and those who compassionate me in my sorrow.

Learn to be so rarely in the company of such, that the faithful will be surprised to see thee conversing with them even when their welfare or necessity demands it.

Learn to abstain from too great affection for relatives. If they frequently visit thee, and freely bring others with them, thus interrupting thee in thy prayer and study, say to them: Why do you seek me, why do you bother me? Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

If those who are about thee or who wait upon thee give evidence of abnormal devotion to thee, strive to restrain it after the example that I gave when I told the daughters of Jerusalem that they should not weep for me but for themselves.

Learn not to be too familiar with any woman, but to commend to my Father all good women.

Learn not to enter the homes of

widows or of virgins, nor to be long alone in the company of any woman.

Learn to beware of suspicions, and to avoid everything that might probably give rise to them.

Learn to despise the charms and smart sayings of young women, and to be ashamed to accept little presents and delicacies from them.

Look, my son, at clerics whose sanctity thou didst once admire, whose example thou didst once imitate, and whom thou beholdest to-day vile, despised and abhorred.

When, my son, did their gold commence to tarnish? When was its bright color changed? Was it not when they began to exercise too little caution in dealing with women?

They feared not the danger of their company; then affection sprang up, then the vile passion was aroused within them, then they sinned and fell.

Now the stones of the wall cry out, now the wood of the partitions gives forth its voice, now what was committed

in secret is revealed to the light of day, and scandal is given to all my people.

Woe to them! It were indeed much better for them if a millstone had been tied about their necks and they were sunk in the depths of the sea.

O my son, let the ruin of these imprudent men, who foolishly trusted in their own strength, be a warning to thee.

Look now at those priests who have not abandoned their first charity, but in holiness and justice have served me all the days of their lives.

They held themselves aloof from the company of women lest wickedness should alter their understanding, or deceit beguile their souls.

They made a covenant with their eyes to not even think of a virgin.

They venerate old women as mothers; they honor young women, but as sisters in all chastity.

They console the widows who are widows indeed, but shun those that live in pleasures.

They carefully avoid also the young widows who are idle, fond of going

about from house to house, and speaking the things they should not.

Imitate, my son, those holy priests and, like them, thou shalt preserve both chastity and charity.

CHAPTER LXXVI

THE ANNUAL RETREAT

IS it not true, my son, that thou sleepest in the dust of the earth? Awake, arise and I will enlighten thee. Come into a quiet place and I will speak to thy heart.

I have kindled a fire in thee, but, if wood is not placed upon it at certain intervals, it will be extinguished.

I have placed thee on the road which leads to life, but, if thou be strengthened and encouraged only haphazardly, thou wilt not run but wilt halt through exhaustion; thou wilt not make progress but wilt fall back.

O my son, how easily the animal man forgets the things that are God! How easily does weak flesh abandon its first fervor!

How easily does the spirit languish and grow cold! How easily does it capitulate to corrupt nature!

Seek, therefore, a suitable time to give

thought to thyself that thou mayst stir up in thee the grace which thou hast received through the imposition of hands.

The greatest of the saints were surely more holy and more valiant than thou; nevertheless they did not believe that they could, without the aid of set periods of recollection, persevere in their first charity.

In holy retreat the saintly St. Charles was still more sanctified, the just St. Francis was still more justified, and the pure St. Ignatius was still more purified.

Even I myself, I Jesus thy God, willed to remain alone in the desert for forty days that thou mightst learn to sanctify thyself in like manner.

My son, give to thyself an account of thy stewardship.

Consider not thine early years which thou spentest in sin and which thou hast bewailed in the bitterness of thy soul, but the more recent years which thou hast passed in the angelic state, in the priesthood and the apostolate.

Hast thou done all things well? Is it not true that thou hast often felt and doth

yet experience a distaste for heavenly things?

Is there not yet with thee the old lukewarmness in prayer, the wandering of a distracted mind, the faulty manner of going about thine accustomed tasks?

What attention dost thou give to temptations and what resistance dost thou oppose to them? What is thy fear of sin?

O my son, perhaps the old Adam, in all his vigor, still abides in thee, and thou art unaware of it.

Perhaps thou hast omitted many good works, done much evil, and dost not advert to it; perhaps thou art not in the state of grace, and yet dost not fear.

Perhaps thou hast neglected important duties and givest little thought to it; thou remainest trusting and confident because thou hast the name of being alive.

Verily, my son, it often happens that those who are the more holy in the estimation of men are in all the greater danger on account of their too great confidence.

Return to the heart, come into soli-

tude, purify thy soul in order that if thou be worthy of hatred thou mayst be made worthy of love.

I have told thee, my son, that thou shouldst be perfect as thy heavenly Father is perfect. Dost thou earnestly desire this? Dost thou strive to attain to this perfection?

What of thine office? What of thy ministry? What of thy humility, patience, obedience? What, above all of thy love of God?

Hast thou lived for God and thy neighbor? Hast thou ever been intent upon promoting in a becoming manner God's glory and the salvation of souls?

Hast thou prevented sins? Hast thou sanctified souls? And if thou wert now to die and appear before thy Judge, couldst thou say: What I ought to have done, I have done?

O my son, come into solitude that thou mayst see what is lacking in thee and correct thy faults.

Come and I will make thee understand why, after so many celebrations of Mass of which one could make thee a saint,

thou art yet so lukewarm; why after so many confessions thy life is so little amended; why after the reception of so many graces thou art yet so poor.

Thou shalt understand, be ashamed, be humiliated, weep, come to life again and lay the foundation of a more holy life.

Come into solitude, my son, and there not only will I pour upon thee clean water that thou mayst be cleansed from all thy filthiness, but also a torrent of the most precious graces, the force of which will delight thy soul.

There I will give to thee a lofty conception of the eternal truths; there I will make known my will to thee; there I will urge on thy tardy will to the accomplishment of good.

Yes, my son, these and many other graces shalt thou find in these spiritual exercises.

But thou shalt rob thyself of these if thou art absent from the holy retreat.

And thus shalt thou cause the irreparable loss of a vast store of merits in this

life and of higher grades of glory in eternity.

It is indeed true, my son, that unless the command was placed upon thee to be present during these periods of recollection, thou wouldst not sin by being absent.

But Joas, King of Israel, does not seem to have sinned by striking the earth only three times with his arrow.

Nevertheless Eliseus, the man of God, was angry with him and said: If thou hadst smitten five or six or seven times thou hadst smitten Syria even to utter destruction.

Likewise I say to thee, my son: Thou dost indeed by thy usual prayers, spiritual readings and other pious exercises, smite thy vices.

But unless, in the recollection of solitude, thou wagest special war against them, thou shalt perhaps not smite them unto utter destruction.

Who, my son, hath known my mind, or who hath been my counsellor? I bestow my gifts gratis.

And if the special graces which thou needest for thy sanctification, I have decreed not to give to thee unless, in accordance with my counsel, thou shouldst spend some days in recollection, certainly by neglecting to do so, thou wouldst deprive thyself of these graces.

Thus this omission, even though it be not sinful, may nevertheless be the cause of thy perdition.

Be prudent, therefore. Retire into solitude, lest any part of the good gift should overpass thee.

If I should say to thee, my son: Come into solitude and I will bestow upon thee the riches of the earth and the honors of the world; thou wouldst indeed come, and come quickly.

If thou wert blind or deaf or dumb or lame or afflicted with some other infirmity, and I should say to thee: Come into solitude and I will restore to thee the uses of thy senses and of thy members, thou shalt be washed clean of thy leprosy and healed of every malady; thou wouldst indeed come, and come quickly;

thou wouldst gladly remain piously recollected, not for a few but for many days.

O slow of heart to believe! Have I not said to thee that in recollection thy soul which is sick shall be healed, which is unclean shall be purified, which is blind shall be given sight; that the deaf shall receive hearing, the dumb the power of speech, the lame the use of their limbs?

Have I not said to thee that thou shalt not only be healed but also sanctified?

What is bodily health and every honor that man can give; what all the riches of the world in comparison with sanctity which purchases eternal happiness? Verily, only a little dust. Come, therefore, and follow me into the desert.

O my son, if what I offer to thee were granted to many of thy brother priests who are now suffering in the flames of purgatory, with what alacrity, thinkest thou, would they not run into solitude, in order to purify themselves of the remains of sins and to perfect their sanctity!

How great would be their joy that they could so easily free themselves from the purging flames!

Alas, perhaps they are there because they were unwilling in times past to recollect themselves in solitude.

And thou, my son, mayst be there one day because thou didst neglect to take part in the spiritual exercises of the retreat.

They lament and weep because they neglected them, but in vain. They shall not go hence till they pay the last farthing.

Do therefore now what is in thy power lest, like them, thou mayst hereafter lament and weep in vain because thou didst not follow the spiritual exercises of the retreat.

CHAPTER LXXVII

A HOLY RULE OF LIFE

DOST thou wish, my son, to make some progress? Do not be too free; subject all thy senses to discipline.

If in my presence thou proposest to thyself a rule and livest according to it, thou shalt live for me.

If on the contrary thou livest without rule, to-day thou shalt lead a strict life, and to-morrow an easy and pampered one.

Therefore draw up for thyself a rule and perform all thy works according to that rule. Thus, thou wilt more easily sanctify thy whole life.

Let the hour for retiring and rising be fixed. Grant to nature the necessary rest, but deny excess to sensuality.

Seven, or at the most eight, hours of sleep are enough for thee; more than that is injurious to health rather than beneficial, enervates the soul and renders it less fit for the daily duties.

Remember, my son, this saying: How long shalt thou sleep, thou sluggard? Wilt thou sleep a little while longer and let poverty come upon thee like a thief, and oh, what poverty? Fear, my son, not so much the lack of bread as the poverty of piety, which is much more to be dreaded.

On awaking, at once raise the eyes of thy soul to me, offer to me thy heart, arm thyself with the sign of the cross, quickly arise like the faithful servant of his master.

While dressing, occupy thy mind with holy thoughts; place thyself in the presence of God, and recall for what purpose thou camest into the world.

Having finished dressing, pray with voice and with soul; spend at least one-half hour in this holy exercise.

It is impossible for thee, without the aid of prayer, to persevere in virtue or to spend thy life in a holy manner.

Thy heart shall indeed soon grow cold if thou neglectest to eat this bread.

After morning prayer, dispose thyself to celebrate Mass if the hour has arrived;

if not, occupy thy time in study and reading.

Remember that lost time does not return; remember that thou wilt render an account for it on the last day.

Study, my son, study daily. If thou rejectest knowledge, it will reject thee.

When the hour for Mass has arrived, prepare to celebrate it with great devotion; diligently examine thy conscience and recollect thyself for some moments before approaching the altar.

While saying Mass, carefully observe all the rubrics, avoid all mistakes and offer the sacrifice with all possible fervor of soul.

After Mass, spend at least a quarter of an hour in thanksgiving before leaving the church.

At a convenient time before dinner, read piously Little Hours.

Give some time also to the particular examination of conscience, in order to see how much progress thou hast made in acquiring some virtues or in rooting out some vice.

To this very useful exercise add the

reading of one chapter of the New Testament.

O my son, let this heavenly summary of my teaching be thine inseparable companion, and the devil will not dare to draw nigh to thee.

Having said grace, sit down to thy frugal repast; and while eating and drinking remember that thou art the servant of God, and eat and drink as becomes his servant.

Honor me sometimes with thy substance, practice during thy meals some act of mortification. Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not lose thy reward.

Dinner being over, retire not from the table without giving thanks.

Then recreate thyself, as suits thy taste, in cheerful conversation or games.

At a given hour recollect thyself and recite Vespers, after which occupy thy time in study and thy priestly duties.

Visit the sick, the afflicted and the poor, wherever their welfare or necessity demands it.

The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, for

whom thou shouldst have a special and tender devotion, honor daily by the recitation of the beads.

During the evening pay a visit, in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, to me who am thy sanctification and redemption, the consolation of the wayfarer and the eternal delight of the saints.

O my son, do not let the laity surpass, in this special devotion, thee who art a man of God and my friend.

Before supper, if it be possible, recite Matins and Lauds for the following day, lest the office postponed until next morning should interfere with thy meditation or be still further deferred on account of some unforeseen duties.

Never neglect pious reading in the evening. For this purpose select the more spiritual books and those that thou knowest to be the more suitable for animating thy soul to aspire to higher perfection.

Then say, with great interior recollection, thy evening prayers, adding thereto a general examination of conscience.

On entering thy bedroom, occupy thyself with holy thoughts or pious ejaculations; sprinkle thy couch with holy water, and arm thyself with the sign of the cross.

Commend thy soul to the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels, and thus thou shalt take thy rest at peace with me and in a devout frame of mind.

Since, my son, it is necessary on account of human frailty, for even religious hearts to be cleansed from worldly dust, and for those who carry the vessels of the Lord to be purified, it is all the more necessary for those who offer sacrifice to go to confession frequently, say every week or at least every fortnight.

I have said to thee, my son, that thou shouldst be ever ready, for at what hour thou thinkest not, the Son of man shall come.

Therefore, sleep not in death, but watch carefully. Set aside, each month, one day in which to prepare thyself in a special manner for death.

In the quiet of thy room meditate upon death; search thy conscience most dili-

gently to see what might cause thee uneasiness if thou wert now to die.

Do what thou wouldst then wish to have done. Confess more carefully, grieve more sincerely and purpose more firmly for the future.

Strengthen thyself with my body, as with holy Viaticum, and as if thou wert about to die, commend thy soul into the hands of thine eternal Father by means of the usual prayers and acts of the principal virtues.

Thus shall thy loins be girt about; thus shalt thou hold in thy hand a burning light; thus shalt thou be a man waiting for thy Lord, who, when he shall return from the wedding, may immediately open to him.

O my son, these rules may seem to be to thee a source not of joy but of sadness; but later on, the most delightful fruits of justice shall accrue to thee from their observance.

Be firm and steadfast, therefore, in practising discipline, and thou shalt ever abound in good works.

And at last, when thou shalt stand

before me to be judged, thou shalt realize that thy labor has not been in vain.

Then indeed thou shalt receive a hundredfold and possess eternal life.

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